GREYWOLVES ON

Hüseyin Nihal ATSIZ

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FOREWORD

Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, one of the most influential writers and advocates of the Republican era, both in Turkish ta- and Turkish literature, as well as to the cause of Turkism. Although his contributions were met with attempts to obstruct him rather than being recognised by state officials during his lifetime, his significance is now widely appreciated, particularly by the younger generation. Mr Atsız's ideas are spreading like wildfire, gaining acceptance day by day. It is for this reason that numerous valuable works on Mr Atsız have been published in recent years. I, too, had been considering undertaking a study on this great figure who has shaped my intellectual world. As many biographical works on Mr Atsız have already been written, I intended to produce something different. However, I had no idea what form my work would take. It was at this time that I had the opportunity to meet Mr Hasan Şahmaran, who lives in Kilis and had spent many years in the company of Atsız Bey. I felt I ought to conduct an interview with Mr Hasan Şahmaran. When I shared this idea with him, he welcomed my request with pleasure, and we met in Kilis to conduct the interview. This interview was published in a magazine and received many positive reviews. During this period, the successive deaths of some of Atsız Bey's friends caused me deep sorrow. I could not bear the thought of the memories shared with Atsız Bey being buried with him. For this reason, I decided to expand the interviews and publish them. In this way, Atsız Bey

would also have come to fruition. That, in short, is the story behind the work you hold in your hands.

Once I'd decided to prepare the work, I immediately got in touch with the interviewees and set to work. Five people, whose names I cannot disclose here, declined my request for an interview for various reasons. We also spoke with Prof. Dr Abdulhalûk Çay, Prof. Dr Abdülkadir Donuk and Erdoğan Saruhanoğlu about conducting interviews, but for various reasons we were unable to meet. We conducted interviews with twenty people—nineteen face-to-face and one online—across eight cities, and this study is the result. I hope this study provides you, the readers, with a different perspective on Mr Atsız and serves as a guide for future research on him.

Throughout this study, we generally asked the same types of questions. We also included many frequently asked questions—including the everyday rumours circulating online about Mr Atsız, such as 'the languages he knew, his great love of tea which he personally served, the fact that he wrote his novels whilst wearing a coat, and his religious views'—and incorporated them into the study.

We also sought to keep the discussion engaging by asking the speakers different questions depending on their status. For example, whilst we asked the speaker—who was a student of Atsız—about 'Atsız the teacher', we asked the speaker who had been tried alongside Atsız in the 1944 Racism-Turancism Trial about 'Atsız in court', and we endeavoured to ensure that you, the readers, could get to know Atsız from every angle.

During this work, I sent the transcripts of the talks to those speakers who wished to review them. They edited the parts they deemed necessary. Generally, I endeavoured not to alter the text from its original form and sought to transcribe it faithfully to the source. We must not forget that, given the speakers' ages, certain details may have been misremembered. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that each speaker may have given a different answer to each question

and that such discrepancies are an inevitable part of interview books, and that we have no scope to alter the conversations, I wish to point this out to you, our valued readers.

I would like to thank Mr İbrahim Metin, who facilitated my contact with some of the interviewees whilst preparing this work; Mr Metin Savaş, who reviewed the work and shared his valuable insights; and Emin Yarımoğlu, who assisted me during my research in Adana; to Ms Şaden Büşra Aktaş, who did not withhold her assistance during my work in Istanbul; to Mr Mete Aksoy, who facilitated the publication of this work; to Mr Oğuzhan Murat Öz-türk, the representative of Historia Publishing House, who worked with me on the text; and to my dear family, who never for a moment ceased to support me despite my neglect of them during this project.

I also pray for the mercy of the Almighty upon Nurettin Pakyürek, Erk Yurtsever and Yücel Hacaloğlu, who passed away after this work was completed.

19 March
2018

Gaziantep

HASAN ŞAHMARAN

(January 2014, Kilis)

– Could you tell us a little about yourself?

– I was born in Kilis in 1935; our lineage traces back to Hanoğlu Harun, one of the Karahanid princes. When my ancestors came here with Hanoğlu Harun, there was a village near Çobanbey called Hanoğlu Village, and they lived in the Han Obası region near Maraş before moving to Kilis. My most recent grandfather worked here as a mufti, and we have been living here (in Kilis) ever since.

– Could you tell us about your own studies?

– After finishing primary school, I went on to secondary school. I was forced to cut my education short. I subsequently learnt the trade of repair work, and later worked as a technician in various places. During this time, I went to Istanbul to fulfil my military service. Before going to Istanbul, I was constantly reading. I used to buy the magazines published in Istanbul. I'm talking about the years 1949–50. At that time**, *Orkun*, *Büyük Doğu* and *Serdengeçti*** were being published. The old *Orkun*, mind you, not the new one. A magazine called ***Sebilürreşad*** was also published. I used to buy and read these publications. Meanwhile, a newspaper called ***Genç Kilis*** was being published. I began writing articles and poems for that newspaper. It was during this time that I began my research. I included my poems in my book ***Almila***

. I published the *Anthology of **Poets from Kilis***. I undertook a study on Şahinbey. I also have a study on the historian Necip Asım Yazıksız Bey. I am carrying out cultural research on Kilis. Previously, my poems and articles had also appeared in the magazines ***Hisar*** and ***Töre***. İlhan Darendelioğlu used to publish a magazine called ***Toprak*** in Istanbul, and I also wrote poetry for that magazine. I began writing regularly on nationalist and Turkic-oriented topics. I met people such as Peyami Safa, İbrahim Çavuşoğlu, İlhan Darendelioğlu, Atsız Bey, Necip Fazıl and many others, and took part in various activities.

– When did you first meet Atsız Bey?

– In 1960, I went to Istanbul for my military service. I met Atsız Bey in Maltepe. After that, I never left his side.

– How did you meet?

– I went to his home; we had a cup of tea and chatted. He took a great liking to me. Because he liked me so much, he kept me by his side. He would give me many books and magazines. Atsız Bey published the magazine ***Ötüken***. I used to assist him. Some of my poems were published in that magazine.

– Who took you to Mr Atsız's home?

– I went there on my own. I had the address; it was in Maltepe…

– What literary activities did you engage in with Mr Atsız?

– I used to write poetry and submit it to *Ötüken*. Mr Atsız also wrote articles. There were some Turkic nationalist friends whose poems I would submit to *Ötüken*. For example, we first published Abdurrahim Karakoç's poems in *Ötüken*. But

Let me say something about Abdurrahim Karakoç… Do you know who was the first to betray us, the Turkic nationalists?

– Who was it?

– You know, the one who got married in America?

– Reha Oğuz Türkkan?

– Yes. Reha Oğuz Türkkan was the first person to betray us. I later corresponded with him; he said he was remorseful. The most recent person to betray us, however, is Abdurrahim Karakoç. Karakoç was one of our finest poets. He moved to the **Akit** magazine. I was the one who introduced him. He had written many epics and marches himself. Later, he betrayed us (the Turkish nationalists).

– So what was the reason for this split?

– As far as I can tell, it was money.

– How many years did you publish a magazine with Atsız Bey?

– He had previously published many magazines: *Orhun*, *Kopuz*, *Altındağ*… He had published these and written many articles. Most recently, he had published the ***Orkun*** magazine. I joined this magazine; however, I did not write any poetry. Later, he published *Ötüken*. In *Ötüken*, I assisted with Atsız Bey's work; I helped with its distribution.

– Did you write for *Ötüken* magazine?

– Yes, I have poems in *Ötüken*. I also wrote for the magazine ***Töre***, published by Emine Işınsu, the daughter of Halide Nusret Zorluta. I wrote for the magazine ***Hisar***,

published by Mehmet Çınarlı.

– Did you engage in political activities with Mr Atsız?

– Mr Atsız never got involved in politics. Neither did I. However, we did keep up with political developments. When the 27 May Coup took place, I went to him in tears. I said to Mr Atsız, *'There's been a coup.'* As nationalists, we were supporting the Democratic Party at the time. When Mr Atsız saw me crying, he said, *'No, no, Hasan, don't cry; it's one of our own, Türkeş*.' We began to feel relieved then. Of course, at that time, Türkeş was of benefit to us. We fell out after the Adana Congress. Türkeş refused to let us sell our magazines. He introduced the flag with the three crescents. He removed our Grey Wolf flag. Mr Atsız was very upset at the time. I was very upset too. Following this incident, Mr Atsız said, *'Hasan, we're leaving them*.' That's when we left the MHP and never got involved in politics again. Mr Atsız didn't get involved either.

– We know that Atsız Bey received an offer to become an MP from the Justice Party; what do you have to say about this?

– He did receive an offer; however, he never accepted it. He did not like politics. He would never have had anything to do with politics. However, he wanted great men to emerge for the advancement of the Turkish nation. He used to say to me, *'Hasan, these Turkmen from the Taurus Mountains will one day lift this nation up and become Turkish statesmen.'* He was waiting for the Turkmen of the Taurus Mountains.

– What were Atsız Bey's thoughts on the Turks living under Russian rule at that time?

– He felt deeply for them. Migrants from across the Turkic world would constantly come to him. Kazakhs, Turkmen, Kyrgyz… We would welcome them together. He took a constant interest in them. He even took an interest in Hungarian Turkologists. I was about 20–25 years old at the time. Many years have passed since then, so I cannot recall the details precisely. He

arranged for me to meet Z. Velidi Togan. İbrahim

Çavuşoğlu and introduced me to many others. I was always by his side. He would say to me, *'Hasan, I love you very much; you are such a pure, honest person—that's exactly how a Turk should be.'*

– Is there an interesting incident you experienced with Mr Atsız?

– I used to visit him constantly. Very distinguished people would come to see him. He would make the tea himself and bring it to us himself. He was so humble. He spoke Turkish in a very pure and unadulterated way. Everyone showed him the utmost respect. He loved the Ottoman Empire dearly. One day I said to him: *'Professor, how is it that the mothers of these Ottoman sultans were foreign?'* Mr Atsız replied: *'Hasan, their fathers were Turkish, weren't they? If a drop of contaminated water were to mix into the Euphrates, would the Euphrates be tainted? No, it wouldn't. The Ottoman dynasty would not be tainted either.'* He used to say, *'The Ottoman sultans are Turkish sultans.'*

– What was Atsız Bey's family life like?

– At that time, he was living with his wife, Bedriye Hanım. He also had a foster daughter named Kaniye. After a while, Bedriye Hanım took their sons and went to Munich. He lived alone. I would visit him too; we'd have tea, chat and stay together.

– Why did Bedriye Hanım go to Germany? Did they get divorced?

– She took their sons and they went to Germany. I suppose they must have separated later on. I'm not aware of it; I don't know why they got divorced.

– From what you observed, what were Mr Atsız's distinctive qualities?

– His great honesty and his extraordinary knowledge of Turkish

history…

– Mr Atsız apparently knew many foreign languages…

– He knew Uyghur very well. He also knew Ottoman Turkish very well.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's literary work?

– He roused the Turkish nation with the novels he wrote. ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*, *The Grey Wolves Rise Again*, *The Mad Wolf***[1]… All Turkish youth read these novels. Later on, these nationalist sentiments and Turkism were fostered through these books. He once told me: *"A migrant came from Kazakhstan. He had read my novels. 'Goodness me, Mr Atsız, did you live in Kazakhstan when you wrote these novels?'* he asked." He would recount this story to me, laughing heartily. It was as if those novels had been written there, in that era. He was particularly fond of the novel ***Ruh Adam*** [2]. There was a character called Güntülü in it. Almıla and Gökçen Kız were characters from his own novels. I incorporated these names into my poetry collection titled ***Almıla***. These heroes… After he passed away, I wrote a poem titled *Atsız Bey*.

– What are your views on the novel *Ruh Adam*? Is Atsız Bey recounting his own life, as suggested in the novel?

– Yes, Selim Pusat in that novel is himself. He would constantly talk about this novel. He would say, *'Hasan, I'm writing a novel. You'll see it; it's very important. It's my life…'*

– Who was the character Güntülü in the novel?

– Güntülü was one of Atsız Bey's secondary school pupils. He was from Mersin. How shall I put it? He made him the hero of his novel.

1 Atsız, Deli Kurt, Ötüken Publications, 62nd edition, 2015.

2 Atsız, Ruh Adam, Ötüken Publications, 60th edition, 2015.

– So, did anything actually happen between them?

– Yes, it's true.

– So, did she have a romantic relationship with Mr Atsız?

– No. He admired her beauty. Mr Atsız was elderly, whilst Güntülü was a young girl. She is merely a symbol in that novel. As I said a moment ago, he used to say, *'The Turkmen children coming from the Taurus Mountains will take over this state.'* His words came true; there are Turkish children everywhere in the Foreign Office, not the 'monşerler'…

– Could you share your thoughts on Mr Atsız's approach to history?

– Atsız Bey attached great importance to Turkish history—that is, Ancient Turkish History. He placed great importance on the Huns, the Göktürks and the Seljuks. He didn't pronounce it 'Selçuk'; he said *'Selçük'*. What did this mean? 'Kü-çük', 'Sel-çük'—that is, 'Little Sel'. In the articles he wrote, he attached great importance to Turkish names. In his view, the greatest Turkish hero was Mete Khan. He loved him dearly. He also loved Atatürk very much. As for Ismet Pasha, he would say to me: *'Hasan, Ismet Pasha is a family man with a wife and children. He's a good man.'* But Ismet Pasha caused Atsız Bey a great deal of suffering. I won't say anything about that.

– In the novel *The Night of the Sycophants*, when the names are read backwards, certain names emerge. What do you have to say about this?

– This also occurs in the novel ***Ruh Adam***. I used to visit him at the Süleymaniye Library. He met some rather unusual people there. To avoid offending anyone, he recounted their stories using altered names. Before the Süleymaniye Library, he was also Fuat Köprülü's assistant. Fuat

Another of Fuat Köprülü's assistants was Kilisli Muallim Rıfat. Atsız Bey was very fond of him. As I am also from Kilis, he would always speak of him.

– Kadir Mısıroğlu claims in his novel *The Night of the Sycophants* that Atsız Bey insulted Atatürk. What is your view on this?

– Don't believe it – there's no truth in that. Atsız Bey admired three heroes in Turkish history: Mete, Atatürk and another whom I can't recall at the moment.

– It was known that Atsız Bey had written his work *Turkish History* before his death. This work subsequently went missing; what are your thoughts on this?

– I don't know whether he sent it to his brother or gave it to his son—I don't know what happened to it. But before he died, he said, *'Hasan, I'm finishing my history of the Turks.'* I know such a book exists. I wonder if he finished it and sent it to a publisher? I don't know.

– What did Atsız Bey think of Fuat Köprülü?

– Mr Atsız was very fond of Fuat Köprülü. He, too, was very fond of Mr Atsız. However, due to Mr Atsız's telegram regarding the Atatürk–Zeki Velidi affair, Köprülü was unable to introduce Mr Atsız to Atatürk. Mr Atsız said, *'I was going to go, but I couldn't because of this incident.'*

– So, did they never meet Atatürk?

– No. He held Atatürk in very high regard.

– Did Atsız Bey harbour any resentment towards Köprülü regarding his expulsion from university?

– No, he wasn't resentful, but he didn't support Atsız either.

– What did Mr Atsız say about the 1944 Turkic-Turanist incidents?

– He said he suffered a great deal. I can't remember his name, but there was a particular prosecutor he was very angry with.

– Is there a prosecutor in his work whom he describes as an 'insect'—could that be him?

– I don't know, it could be.

– What was his view of foreign nationalists—for example, Georgians, Kurds and the like—who loved the Turks?

– He liked Mehmet Akif. He used to say, *'He was brought up in Turkish culture…'* He didn't like Arabs, Circassians or Kurds.

– Did he dislike nationalists as well?

– No. For example, they call Saladin a Kurd; Atsız Bey would say, *'Leave him be, his mother was Kurdish.'*

– Atsız Bey's religious views are one of the most debated issues; what are your thoughts on this?

– Atsız Bey used to say, *"I am a Muslim. The religion of my nation is my religion. Therefore, I am also a Muslim.*" He would get angry and say, *"Hasan, the Turks have written 20–30 books about the Battle of Uhud, yet they haven't written a single word about Alparslan's Victory at Malazgirt.*" He would get angry at this point.

– Was there any element of Shamanism in Atsız Bey?

– There is no such thing as a religion called 'shamanism'. They believed in Allah in the heavens. Their religion was the Sky God.

– We know of his sensitivity regarding smoking…

– He didn't smoke. However, he always kept matches in his pocket. That was because the electricity cut out so often in Istanbul. That house was inherited by him from Rıza Nur. He was Rıza Nur's adopted son…

– According to Kadir Mısıroğlu's claim, Atsız acquired the house through the courts after Rıza Nur's death. What are your thoughts on this?

– No, that's not true. He gifted the house to him. I know this. He left everything to Atsız.

– What did Mr Atsız think of Reha Oğuz Türkkan?

– I never met him, but we corresponded. He was in America**.** His father was a civil servant. He acted impulsively when he was young. We wrote to each other, and he told me*, 'I'm very sorry; Mr Atsız did the right thing.'*

– How did he die?

– I was by his side; a friend of mine, Yasin, was reading to him. Atsız Bey said*, 'Read on, read on—it does me a world of good.'* This also demonstrates his devotion to Islam.

– Thank you very much for interviewing me.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR DR YAŞAR BÜYÜKOŠLU

(10 February 2016, Gaziantep)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I was born in the Nizip district of Gaziantep. I completed my primary, secondary and sixth-form education in Nizip. Between 1975 and 1980, I served as a history teacher, deputy headteacher and senior deputy headteacher at Gaziantep High School. Between 1980 and 1984, I served as headteacher at Gaziantep Anatolian High School. I have been working at Gaziantep University since 1988. Between 2003–2004 and 2008–2011, I served twice as Head of the Nizip Vocational School at Gaziantep University and as a member of the Gaziantep University Senate. Between 1996 and 2006, I was a founding member of the Müdafaa-i Hukuk Association and served as Chair of the Gaziantep Branch. I undertook my master's degree and PhD, which I had previously left unfinished, at the Atatürk Principles and History of the Revolution Institute at Hacettepe University. I am currently a lecturer in the Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, at Gaziantep University, specialising in the History of the Republic of Turkey.

– How and when did you meet Mr Atsız?

– During my secondary school years, I was very fond of historical novels. Hüseyin Nihal Atsız's novel ***Bozkurtlar*** [3]

3 Atsız, *Bozkurtlar*, Ötüken Publications, 114th edition, 2018,

and began to develop a deep interest in Turkish history. After finishing secondary school, I immediately enrolled, as my first choice, in the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, Istanbul University, and specifically chose the General Turkish History department—known at the time as the Department of Turkish and Asian History. There, I became a student of Prof. Dr Ibrahim Kafesoğlu. In fact, I was the late professor's final PhD student. He passed away in 1984. I was unable to complete my PhD at that time. I owe everything I know about history from my student years there to the late Professor Kafesoğlu. In particular, regarding the greatness of the Turkish nation and the fact that we are the heirs to such a great civilisation, we learnt all of this in Kafesoğlu's lectures. Naturally, whilst studying Kafesoğlu's lectures, our interest in Atsız—a living legend of that era—grew and developed even further. Indeed, in May 1972, if I am not mistaken, there were Prof. Dr. Gülçin Çandarlıoğlu, Prof. Dr. Abdulhalûk Çay, Prof. Dr. Abdülkadir Donuk, myself, Fevziye Gül and two other friends of mine. I cannot quite recall their names, but as a group of six, we set off from our Faculty of Literature in Beyazıt, crossed over to Kadıköy by ferry, and then took the suburban train to Kartal-Maltepe, where we were guests of the late Professor Atsız. The year was 1972.

– So, whose idea was it to visit Professor Atsız?

– The idea came from Mrs Gülçin. She gathered us together, suggesting we go to Mr Atsız's house. At the time, Mrs Gülçin was an associate professor in our department. Abdulhalûk Çay was an external lecturer, whilst Abdülkadir Donuk was also in our department. We all went together.

– How did Mr Atsız welcome you?

– When we arrived, Professor Atsız was extremely unwell. But despite his illness, he took an interest in us. His illness

He was in very good health. He had assistants and carers at home. It was a two-storey house in Maltepe. That is how I remember it, and he welcomed us with great hospitality. In fact, at that time, *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi* had just been published as part of the *'1,000 Fundamental Works'* series. He had written this work himself. Mr Atsız was a great novelist, but during that visit, we also came to recognise his qualities as a great Turkish historian alongside his work as a novelist. Mr Atsız signed his books and presented them to each of us individually. At that time, his novel ***Ruh** Adam* had been published in early 1971 and again in late 1972. It was as if Atsız Hoca had recounted his own life in that novel, and Mrs Gülçin would explain who all the characters in the novel corresponded to in real life. After all, he had lived through it all. I believe his final work was also ***Ruh Adam***. Of course, before we visited him, there were monthly and weekly magazines. There was ***Ötüken* magazine**. We used to buy and read these magazines with great enthusiasm in Cağaloğlu. These magazines always helped to open our minds to Turkish history. Let me give an example: in a place like Istanbul—I'm talking about the 1970s—***Ötüken* magazine** had a print run of ten thousand copies. Which magazine today is printed and distributed on the same scale as ***Ötüken***? Some circles regard Atsız Hoca as a poet or a literary figure. We, however, saw him as a great historian. He possessed a thorough knowledge of Turkish history right back to its earliest ages. In particular, his profound familiarity with Ottoman history, down to the finest details, elevated him even further in our eyes as a truly great figure. The impression Atsız Hoca left on me after my visit was that of a scholar who sought to unify Turkish history from its earliest periods to the present day, viewing it not in separate sections but as a single, cohesive whole. According to Atsız, the Turks are a nation descended from a ruling class, possessing the pride of lords and beys. Once again, he presents himself to us as a scholar, a novelist, a literary figure and a historian who best portrays the Turks in historical novels. This statement is of the utmost importance: the Turks in history

novels. This is of the utmost importance… Furthermore**,** the Turks depicted in the **'Grey Wolves'** series**—**in ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*** **and** ***The Resurrection of the Grey Wolves***—are just, protective-protective, freedom-loving, respectful of their traditions and customs, who view all people as guests sent to them by God and see themselves as the protectors of these people—and in this respect, it is highly significant that they are portrayed as embodying the true virtues of the Turk.

– What are your thoughts on Hüseyin Nihal Atsız's literary side? As a historian, what have his historical novels contributed to Turkish youth?

– My student years in Istanbul were in the 1970s – the final stirrings of the '68 generation. In those years, the Ülkücü and Turkic nationalist movements, alongside far-left organisations and factions, were constantly in conflict with one another. It was during that period that we encountered writings by Professor Atsız that delved into the very depths of the Turkish nation. He taught us that the Turkish nation was not formed solely by the Republic of Turkey, that it was not limited to the Ottomans and the Seljuks, and that even before them, the Turks had been a great civilisation. We learnt these things from Professor İbrahim Kafesoğlu; however, he himself would tell us that the source of inspiration for his ideas was Ziya Gökalp and Hüseyin Nihal Atsız.

– Yes, that statement of yours is quite significant…

– Yes, if I am not mistaken, in 1984, when the Turkish National Culture Foundation awarded Professor Kafesoğlu the Science Award of the Year, he received the award from Professor Dr Tahsin Banguoğlu. He gave a speech whilst accepting this award. In this speech, Kafesoğlu said*: 'I grew up with the ideas of Ziya Gökalp and Atsız. But I saw a shortcoming in them.'* What is this

shortcoming? Both Ziya Gökalp and the late Atsız focused on the novelistic, poetic and literary aspects of Turkish history. For example, Ziya Gökalp's poem **'Alageyik'** stretches all the way back to Turan. Atsız's novel **'Bozkurtlar'** appeals to readers of all ages. There was not a single Turkish young person who had not read this novel. I cannot recall any. These works delve into the depths of Turkish history. Kafesoğlu states: *'I have endeavoured to synthesise, as a scientific endeavour, the truths from the depths of Turkish history that Atsız and Ziya Gökalp presented in an almost legendary manner. It was with this mindset that I produced the work *Turkish National Culture* as the result of twenty-five years' research.' 'In other words, I have scientifically proven the ideas presented in the poetry of Ziya Gökalp and Nihal Atsız—namely, the greatness of the Turkish nation and the notion that they are members of a great civilisation—but my source of inspiration is these two thinkers,' he* says.

– So, could we say that Kafesoğlu has given a scientific dimension to the ideas of Gökalp and Atsız?

– Yes, he grounds the ideas of these two scholars in a scientific foundation, proves them, and as a result, after twenty-five years of work, produces the work ***Turkish National Culture**[*] [(4)]. He has stated this himself.

– What happened when you visited Mr Atsız's home? Do you remember? What took place?

– Professor Atsız emphasised the need for a thorough investigation of Ottoman history, particularly the necessity of turning to our own sources, and noted that many events relating to both Republican and Ottoman history had not yet been brought to light through a thorough examination of the sources. *'I wrote the *Aşıkpaşazade History* for this very purpose,'* he used to say. Indeed, Ziya Gökalp was a great thinker, the founder of sociology, and a great Turkish nationalist; Atsız was a great

4 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, Turkish National Culture, Ötüken Publications, 41st edition,

2017.

a Turkish nationalist poet and literary figure; following these conversations, we saw once again during our visit that he was not only a great literary figure but also a great historian.

– We are aware of Mr Atsız's fondness for tea…

– When we arrived, we were offered tea. He was already confined to a wheelchair. He was sitting in a chair. He was in the final stages of his illness.

– How did you feel after leaving that visit?

– We were very pleased. I was in my final year of the history degree in '72. As a young historian, meeting such a genius further cemented Atsız's place in our eyes, and we felt the pride of being Turkish even more deeply within ourselves.

– Were Gülçin Çandarlıoğlu and Mr Atsız friends, or was it a teacher-student relationship?

– They were friends. Mrs Gülçin and Atsız had been in frequent contact for some time beforehand. Abdulhalûk Çay, in particular, was a friend of ours who was in constant contact with Atsız at the time.

– The years when you were at university were quite turbulent and chaotic; it was a period when the so-called '68 generation' emerged, and organisations such as the Young Idealists' Organisation and other Turkic-nationalist groups were particularly active. What role did Atsız Bey play amongst the nationalist students during that time?

– Before I went to Istanbul, I was one of the founders of the Young Idealists Organisation in Nizip in 1968. This was because Atsız's **'Bozkurtlar'** series, in particular, had greatly broadened our horizons

and we established this organisation. We enrolled at university as Turkic-nationalist, nationalist students. That is why I chose to study history. There, I found myself in such an environment that, for example, we would attend our daytime lectures, and on Tuesdays and Fridays we would go to the conferences organised by the Kubbealtı Society at the Kara Mustafa Paşa Madrasah. There, Turkish nationalist and patriotic lecturers would give us talks on current political events. Who would come, for example? Ekrem Ayverdi, Nihat Sami Banarlı, Prof. Muharrem Ergin, Prof. İbrahim Kafesoğlu, Prof. Oktay Aslanapa, Prof. Faruk Kadri Timurtaş, Prof. Mehmet Kaplan, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Faruk Akgül, and Associate Professor Mustafa Kafalı – these are the names I can recall at the moment. Every Tuesday and Friday evening, much like an academic institute, they would explain historical, artistic and cultural events to us in the form of lectures. We might even have completed our 'second university' through the lectures we attended at the Kubbealtı Madrasah.

– What exactly was the building you refer to as the Kubbealtı Medrese?
What was its founding purpose, and who was its founder?

– It was founded by Nihat Sami Banarlı and Ekrem Ayverdi, and was run by Sâmiha Ayverdi, Ekrem Ayverdi's sister. It was an organisation dedicated to serving Turkish culture. Of course, all these people have now passed away. I do not know whether the Kubbealtı Conferences are still taking place. They also produced some excellent publications.

– Did Mr Atsız ever come to Kubbealtı?

– No, I never saw Hüseyin Nihal Atsız. Because those were the years when the Hoca was ill. But **the Ötüken magazine** was being published.

– So his academic work was continuing, then?

– Yes, his academic work was continuing, and those wishing to visit him or speak with him would go to his two-storey house with a garden in Kartal Maltepe.

– So, was an appointment required to meet Mr Atsız?

– Of course. On that occasion, our older sister Gülçin – we used to call her 'abla' back then – had arranged the appointment and our request for a meeting.

– Did you meet Mr Atsız again after that visit?

– No. Later on, I had the opportunity to attend a lecture given by his brother, Nejdet Sançar, at Kubbealtı. Sançar was a literature teacher. He was a tall, burly man.

– Did you meet Nejdet Sançar?

– No, I only attended his lecture.

– What was the subject of the lecture?

– It was on literature and history. He, too, was in the twilight of his life.

– I suppose you didn't have the chance to meet Mrs Bedriye Atsız.

– No.

– Did you know Yağmur Atsız or Buğra Atsız?

– No. Yağmur Atsız lived in Germany. After his father's death, he wrote articles for the **Cumhuriyet** and **Akşam** newspapers. We read them out of respect and reverence for her father. She used the name Yağmur Atsız simply because she was Mr Atsız's daughter. However, as we could not find in her articles the same deep interest in Turkish history that Atsız had, she never really caught our attention.

– What are your thoughts on the 1944 Racism–Turancism Incident?

– When we went to university, Ord. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Zeki Velidi Togan—a great Turkish historian who had been involved in that movement—was our department head, and he had passed away that year. We were aware of the events involving Alparslan Türkeş and Nihal Atsız in 1944—the coffins, the mistreatment, the torture, the attacks on Turkish nationalists, and so on. As we became familiar with the names associated with these events, our interest in Turkish nationalism grew even further. In particular, Nihal Atsız's articles, letters and open letters published during that period—directed against the then government, against İsmet İnönü, the Minister of National Education [5]and the Prime Minister [6]—always held our interest. For this reason, the significance of our meeting in 1972 has also increased. Although Atsız is known to young people primarily as a writer and poet, in my view he is a great Turkish historian.

– Did you know any of the defendants in the 1944 Incident personally?

– Apart from Atsız and Sançar, I did not meet with anyone else.

5 Hasan Ali Yücel

6 Şükrü Saraçoğlu

– It was known that Mr Atsız was writing his work on Turkish History before his death. This work subsequently disappeared. When you met with Mr Atsız, was this work discussed?

– Now that you've asked this question, I've remembered. If I'm not mistaken, Erol Kılınç was also in our group.[7]He is currently the owner of Ötüken Publishing House in Istanbul.[8]

– Was Mr Erol Kılınç part of the group that went to Atsız's house?

– Yes. That's how I remember it. After Atsız's death, he tried to complete the work Atsız had written; he spoke to his heirs, but was unable to bring it to a conclusion. It remained unfinished. We were also aware that he had been working on this. Because in the final years of his life, he had been striving to address Turkish history as a whole.

– Was there any interesting incident at Mr Atsız's home that sticks in your mind?

– Mr Atsız was delighted to receive a visit from a group of historians. It wasn't like a normal visit. He showed us great warmth, as if we were his own children, as if we were dear to his heart. He took the books out himself and signed them for us. He signed mine with the words: *'With my best regards to the young historian Yaşar Büyükoğlu.*'

– Which of his books did he sign?

– He signed ***Aşıkpaşazade** History* from the *1000 Essential Works* series. The book had only just been published at the time.

7 I contacted Erol Kılınç, but he declined my request for an interview, stating that he did not have many memories to share.

8 Mr Erol Kılınç serves as the managing editor at Ötüken Neşriyat.

– Did you attend the funeral?

– No.

– The most debated aspect of Atsız is his religious views.

– Atsız expresses these views in his novels as well, particularly in the novel *__Ruh Adam__*. After all, according to our faith—according to the Islamic faith—everyone's faith is their own. For example, do we not benefit from the work of Edison, who discovered electricity, just because he was not a Muslim?

– We do.

– That's it. We do not judge him by his religious practice, but by the services he rendered to the Turkish nation, Turkish history and Turkish culture; and Atsız is a genius who deserves a place among the very highest ranks of Turkish nationalism. He is at the pinnacle, an unattainable height. Whether his faith is this or that, we must rise above such matters. I cannot say. Whatever anyone says, I cannot express an opinion on the matter.

– So you haven't heard anything on this subject from Mr Atsız himself?

No.

– There's been a real Atsız craze of late. What do you think of the books being written about him?

– If Atsız's life and works are considered as a whole, his great contributions to Turkish nationalism become fully understood. Hayri Yıldırım wrote a book. I've looked into it.

I also attended one of his lectures. Some fine points… So it seems Atsız's influence is still going strong.

– Thank you very much for interviewing me.

– I thank you very much. It is particularly heartening to see our young students and historians in the field of history taking an interest in such a vast ocean of knowledge as Atsız. He is truly a great Turkist and Turkish nationalist. I thank you.

– You're welcome.

HASAN SAMİ BOLAK

(22 March 2016, Kayseri)

Hasan Sami Bolak[9]

He was born in Kayseri on 10 May 1942. He completed his secondary education at Kayseri High School. He graduated from the Department of Industry at the Ankara Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences. He began his career in journalism in 1960. He completed his military service in the Menemen Specialised Battalion. After his military service, he graduated from the Ankara Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences. He took up his post as the first Director of Press and Publications at Kayseri City Council. During his tenure, he established the first Kayseri branch of the Republican Peasants' People's Party (CKMP), of which Alparslan Türkeş was the Chairman. Consequently, he was removed from his post as Head of the Municipal Press and Publications Department by the political authorities. In Kayseri, he founded the **newspapers *Milli Ülkü*, *Yeni Sabah*, *Orta Doğu* and *Millet*,** as well as the ***Erciyes** Gazetesi*. He also published **the magazines *Spor Kayseri*, *Kurultay* and *Sel***. He is the owner and editor-in-chief of the ***Erciyes** Gazetesi*, which is published daily in Kayseri.

On 2 October 1992, he founded Star FM, Kayseri's first private radio station, broadcasting on the 93.5 MHz FM band. He produced and directed countless political and literary programmes on all television channels in Kayseri.

9 This biography was sent to us at our request by Mr Hasan Sami Bolak.

He took courses on Hypnotism and Spiritualism from Dr Recep Doksat, and on Electronics and High-Frequency Technology from Mehmet Mete. He built the power section of the transmitter for his own radio station, Star FM, himself. For a time, he practised hypnosis using the Mesmer method and published these sessions as a series in a daily newspaper (Devrim Gazetesi, Kayseri, 1962).

His play *The Men in Blue Shirts* was staged on numerous occasions. In 1972, it was broadcast as a sketch on the Kazakh, Uzbek and Uyghur sections of Radio Liberty in Munich. He wrote hundreds of articles for various newspapers and magazines. He delivered dozens of academic and political lectures both at home and abroad.

In 1968, he established Turkey's first nationalist training camp in Kayseri, attended by nationalist youths and known to the public as the 'Commando Camps'. He actively participated in the theoretical and practical training of the youths at this camp and the three others he subsequently established.

Prior to 12 September 1980, he served as the Provincial Chairman of the MHP in Kayseri for two years. He taught literature, composition and philosophy for two years at Kayseri Evening High School. He speaks German and English.

Many of his poems, written in the aruz and hece metres, have been published in renowned journals, encyclopaedias and anthologies. Some of his poems, set to music in the mâhur mode by the composer Erol Sayan, have been included in the TRT repertoire.

In 1973, he established the first offset printing press in Kayseri, and in 2005, the first web offset newspaper printing system. He manufactured Turkey's first horizontal domestic (57×82) repro camera capable of capturing orthochromatic film newspaper pages. (1973)

Hasan Sami Bolak is a permanent member of the Press Council and holds a Press Honour Card. He is married to Mevlüde Nevin, who is also a permanent member of the Press Council. He has three children: Beyhan, Fatih and Nihan.

His children, Beyhan and Fatih, are also in the press sector, like their parents. Beyhan Bolak Hisarlıgil is the editor-in-chief of **'TOL'**, a magazine focusing on architecture, whilst Fatih Bolak is the Editor-in-Chief of the **Erciyes** Newspaper.

– How did you meet Atsız Bey?

– Atsız Bey had a nephew named Afşın Sançar. Nejdet Sançar's son had passed away; I believe he was 13 years old. At that time, there was a newspaper **called 'Yeni İstanbul'**, which catered to right-wingers, nationalists and Turkic nationalists; through that newspaper, they organised an Afşın Sançar Writing Competition. Nejdet Sançar, Afşın's father… This competition was titled *'What Should Turkish Youth Be Like?'*. At the time, I was in my final year at Kayseri High School. I took part in that competition. In 1962, Galip Erdem was also writing for the ***Yeni İstanbul*** newspaper. Galip Abimiz rang me. Our telephone number was 1581; back then, numbers were four digits long, and he said, *'Hasan, you've come first in the vote. Congratulations.*' I thanked him and we hung up, and a short while later Galip Abimiz rang again. 'Hasan,' he said, *'In the competition, the poet Halide Nusret Zorlutuna arrived late. Because of your line, "The ideal Turkish youth would even sacrifice his father for the cause when necessary", she said, "I won't award first place to someone who would sacrifice his father," and Atsız and Halide Nusret Zorlutuna got into an argument, after which Professor Atsız left the meeting. 'They demoted you to third place,'* he said. At first, I was overjoyed. I was still pleased, but I was also saddened by being demoted to third place. Why wouldn't one be sad if they were first and then ended up third? It was a nationwide competition… I read somewhere that 760 people had taken part in the competition. I don't know exactly how many people took part. But of course, when a nationwide competition is advertised in a nationwide daily newspaper, it's only natural that the number of entrants would be high. Shortly afterwards, an awards ceremony was held at the Ankara office of **Yeni İstanbul**

and the prizes were to be presented. Before going to Ankara, I went to the **Yeni İstanbul** newspaper, where I was working as a reporter. This was my first trip from Kayseri to Istanbul. Bus fares between Istanbul and Kayseri were 5 lira at the time. If I'd come first, I would have received 2,500 lira. They were giving 1,500 lira for second place and 750 lira for third. Considering
– considering that the bus journey from Kayseri to Istanbul cost 5 lira – 750 lira was really 'good money'. I travelled to Istanbul by intercity bus. I'd spent the night on the journey. In the morning, I popped into the ***Yeni İstanbul*** newspaper. Yücel Hacaloğlu, the newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, was there. I believe Mustafa Kayabek, who had come to the newspaper following a call from Yücel Hacaloğlu, picked me up and we went together to the ***Milli Yol*** magazine on Nuruosmaniye Street. At that time, the weekly ***Milli Yol*** magazine was being published by İsmet Tümtürk, the son of the famous writer Cenap Şehabettin. It was a very high-quality magazine from the post-1960 era. I also wrote for it from time to time. I still have those collections. Shortly after arriving at the ***Milli Yol*** magazine, I met İsmet Tümtürk. A little later, Atsız—who was my 'ideological comrade' and that of many of us—arrived at the magazine. They introduced me to him, and I kissed his hand. I was on cloud nine. A man like Atsız was hugging, kissing and embracing me – the very person whose article had been awarded first prize, only to be demoted to third place by the jury following an objection from a female poet. More than 50 years have passed since then. He, too, said, *'Come here, you grey wolf of Anatolia,'* and embraced me; he kissed my forehead. I take pride in my Turkishness and take pride in my Turkish nationalism.

The **Yeni İstanbul** newspaper had paid me my fee. We chatted for a while at **Milli Yol**, and afterwards Atsız and Mustafa Kayabek took me over to the Beyoğlu area. There were luxury shops in Beyoğlu. We went into one. We bought me a coat for 250 lira, which was very stylish by the standards of the time. I learnt later that similar coats were cheaper in the side streets, but people like us—people like Atsız—didn't know much about business. If it were now, perhaps

I might understand, but in the end we spent a third of the money on that coat. We got to see a bit of Istanbul. In the late afternoon, Mustafa Kayabek said, *'Let's not make you pay for a hotel. Stay at our house tonight, and tomorrow travel to Ankara with the driver in the *Yeni İstanbul* newspaper's delivery lorry—that way you won't have wasted money on a bus ticket*.' We agreed and went to a two-storey but rather small house—I can't recall the neighbourhood now. Despite the cramped space, Mustafa Kayabek put me up at his home so that I wouldn't have to pay for a hotel. Not long after, half a century later, I met Mustafa Kayabek's son on Facebook. That must be fate!

It was on this occasion that I first met Atsız. Because of me, he and the late Halide Nusret Zorlutuna had fallen out. This sentence was very important to Atsız*: 'A Turkish youth will, if necessary, sacrifice even his own father for the sake of his cause.'* In Atsız's eyes and mind, this was a very commendable act; however, Halide Nusret Zorlutuna – being a lady, after all – was also right in her own way, I think: *'I would not award first place to a man who sacrifices his father,'* she said. That was the day they fell out with one another because of me. That is how I met Atsız. But even after that, Atsız and I continued to write for the same magazines, and right up until his death, Atsız was—and remains—my ideological comrade.

I read almost every one of his articles. After I got married, I had three children. None of them survived due to jaundice. They said, *'From now on, during pregnancy, bring your wife to Ankara, to Hacettepe Hospital. Let the birth take place there*.' In 1975, during her subsequent pregnancy, we admitted my wife to Hacettepe in Ankara; we had a daughter, and the late Alpaslan Türkeş, together with Muzaffer Yenge, came to congratulate us on the new arrival. Had we had a son, we would have named him 'Atsız'; but it was a girl. I asked Türkeş to help us choose a name for the child. Addressing my wife and me, he said: *'What shall we call her*?' *'Sir, if it had been a boy, I would have named him Atsız; but it's a girl*,' I replied. *'Well then, what shall we call her*?' *'You*

What do you think, sir?' I asked. 'How about *Beyhan?*' he asked. My wife liked the name; she said, *'That's fine, sir,'* and so we named our daughter Beyhan.

Alpaslan Türkeş and his wife, Muzaffer Yenge, had brought a bottle of 'Boğaziçi' brand cologne as a 'welcome gift'. The bottle was very beautiful; we kept it for about five or six years. Then, unfortunately, the cologne bottle broke. I'm very sorry about that. It was a priceless gift from Muzaffer Yenge to us. Later on, I visited their home on Kader Street in Bahçelievler, Ankara, a few times, and she always treated me with great hospitality.

– Did you have any further contact with Halide Nusret Zorlutuna after the competition?

– No, not at all. And thank goodness it didn't. Let me explain why I say 'thank goodness'. Money isn't important, but the strange thing is this: I came third, yet the winner, Aytuğ Kaplan, was never heard of. Nor was the runner-up, İsmail Sefa Coşkuner; and fourth place went to Münir Tümtürk. I don't know if Münir Tümtürk is still alive. In later years, at a political open-air rally in Nevşehir, I met Senator Köksal Toptan. Köksal Toptan is also a nationalist friend of ours. He served as Speaker of Parliament for a long time. When we met, he said to me, *'Hasan, in that competition where you came third, I came tenth*.' I replied, *'At least you became a senator and a minister, whereas I've achieved nothing*,' and we hugged, kissed and laughed.

– Who presented you with the award?

– Well, that's a rather sour subject. I received the award from Nejdet Sançar. The ceremony took place in Ankara, at the newspaper's Ankara office. My face looked so sour in the photographs that, when I looked at them later, even I realised I'd behaved badly. Halide Nusret Zorlutuna wasn't there. If she'd been there, I would have taken her hand

in that state of mind I was in at the time. Not now, of course, but back then I was deeply offended. Even now, whenever my country, my nation or my state is at stake, I am a man who, if necessary, would 'sacrifice my own father for my beliefs'. We will sacrifice both ourselves and our fathers. There is no question of handing over this country, this homeland, like that. Naturally, that incident was reflected in the meeting. I must have looked rather grim. The photos were published in **Orkun** Magazine. There's a photo of the first person, one of the second, and the fourth is of Münir Tümtürk. They were right not to include mine. It's just as well they didn't. If it had been now, I wouldn't have forgiven myself for that photograph. I'd come across as though I were saying, *'How could you do this to me?'* There's a group photograph of us in the **Yeni İstanbul** newspaper. Everyone looks cheerful; I'm wearing a tie and all, but I look sullen.

– Yes, did you later engage in literary activities with Mr Atsız?

– Not one-on-one, but I followed his writings.

– Did you write for the same magazines or anything?

– Of course, of course – as we were both writers, I wrote for many different magazines, though I can't recall their names. However, one day – I can't remember the date – when I visited Türkeş, he mentioned a few things and tossed a magazine in front of me. It was one of the magazines Atsız wrote for; I can't remember which one. It was about 40–50 years ago. Türkeş said, *'Hasan, look at what this professor has done. Look at the article he's written*.' Atsız had written an article called 'A Remedy **for the East's Troubles**'. Back then, we hadn't yet changed the party's name; it was still the CKMP. He was going to the East. He was going to do some propaganda work there. *'Now, when I go there, they'll put this magazine in front of me. Look at what this professor has done,' he* said. Türkeş was telling me this, but on one side was

Atsız, and on the other

Türkeş, I'm not going to express my views alongside them. Atsız (most likely because of this article) was taken to court and went to prison. It could have been this article or another, but I know very well that he went to prison. He was later pardoned by the President.

– Fahri Korutürk.

– Is that him?

– Yes

– He was pardoned by him and released from prison. In 1944 (during the Racism-Turanism trial), he was among those imprisoned and tortured in the 'coffin cell'. (Türkeş was also among those imprisoned alongside Atsız.)

– Well, as a writer yourself, what do you think of Atsız Bey's literary side?

– Atsız is not, of course, an aruz poet like Yahya Kemal. In his poems, patriotic fervour takes precedence, and he used syllabic metre. All in all, he is a very fine poet. I always take his style as a model, particularly in prose. Where he uses exclamation marks, I do the same. I was greatly influenced by him. If I am a good writer, it is largely due to Atsız's influence. He is one of the writers I look up to most.

– So, what are your thoughts on Atsız Bey's work as a historian?

– I'm not particularly taken with it—perhaps because his approach to history relies on rote learning, or perhaps because of my own poor memory. My literary side is somewhat different, but Atsız is a good historian. In terms of his intellectual and physical endurance

I feel a very strong attachment to Atsız. We, as Turkish youth, have learnt a great deal from him.

– You're a journalist. As a journalist, have you ever interviewed Mr Atsız, or have you ever considered doing so?

– No. The thing is, my journalism was a secondary concern back then. We were idealists. We were nationalists. Then my youth was spent in the mountains. I was the one who established Turkey's first commando camp. I set up four commando camps and trained many idealists there. Carving out time from that, I worked as a journalist both to earn a living and for the cause. I hold a 'Permanent Press Pass', but that's no great feat. It's an easy thing… My wife also holds the same card. But there are heroic emphases in Atsız's poems. There are those lines that exude: *'Trust in your own self, trust in yourself, trust in your race, trust in your lineage…'* That is why there will never be another Atsız. I am in awe of him.

– Did you attend the Adana Congress in 1969?

– At the CKMP General Congress held in Adana in 1969, I was serving as the Kayseri provincial chairman for the third time. It was there that we changed the party's name to MHP. I went there as the CKMP provincial chairman and returned to Kayseri as the MHP provincial chairman. Niyazi Adıgüzel from the Istanbul group was there. There were a few minor disagreements with colleagues regarding the party's emblem… They wanted the emblem to feature only the grey wolf. Earlier, Türkeş had summoned us to Ankara – as provincial chairmen. He said, *'The Istanbul group wants it to be the grey wolf, but we are a party. We will attract votes from all sections of society. 'The party's emblem* should *be the "three crescents", and the Youth Wing's emblem should be the "crescent with the grey wolf".'* Following this meeting, the provincial chairmen adopted a decision along these lines at the Adana congress.

– Was Mr Atsız present at that congress?

– No, he wasn't.

– Why did Mr Atsız and Mr Türkeş fall out? Did they fall out?

– Look, I don't use the term 'falling out' here. They might have had a falling out with one another, but I don't think they were actually estranged. I heard some things later on. It might have been because of that article in the magazine I mentioned to you just now. Apart from that, there was no rift between them. They were people who had slept in the same barracks and endured hardships together.

– Did Türkeş tell you anything about Atsız apart from this incident?

– No. We certainly didn't touch on such subjects.

– Well, what are your thoughts on the 1944 Turkic-Turanist incidents?

– The more I read about and reflect on the 1944 events, the more I harbour a deep resentment towards the mindset that waged war against Turkism. I haven't forgotten those prison cells. If I had the chance, I'd treat those who subjected them to such torture very harshly. Those people lay there for us, for our race, for our state and our nation. I have respect for all of them. Those who meted out that punishment to them are remembered with hatred by us for the rest of their lives. I know them by name. I won't name them; everyone knows who they are anyway.

– You are someone who has also met Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. Do you have any knowledge of the relationship between Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and Atsız?

– No, I have no such knowledge. When I was at secondary school, my father used to buy the **Milliyet** newspaper. He would read Peyami Safa on page 3. I'm a great admirer of Peyami Safa. I first heard of Atsız from my father. I'm talking about when I was 13 or 14 years old. That's how I got involved in the struggles. That's when I got to know Necip Fazıl. I looked at his poems. He came to Kayseri a few times. On one occasion, I was present at the welcoming ceremony. There's a photo online of Necip Fazıl and me standing side by side at the station during the welcoming ceremony. As soon as Türkeş's two-year exile in New Delhi came to an end, I was the one who first brought him to Kayseri. I took him to the village of Yukarıköşkerli in Pınarbaşı, the village of his ancestors. There, Türkeş said, *'Our forefathers were exiled to Cyprus by the sultan for their misdeeds. I was born in Nicosia, Cyprus.*' It was Türkeş's first visit to his ancestors' village. I had taken him there. I am also a poet. Necip Fazıl is one of the rare poets who write in heptasyllabic verse. He is a truly exquisite poet. I admire him greatly as a poet. I admire Peyami Safa greatly as a writer, but when it comes to idealism, At-sız comes to mind; when it comes to political idealism, Türkeş comes to mind. I have tried to be very close to these four individuals and to absorb their art and courage. We have worked together on occasion.
Just as with Türkeş…

– Did you work with Peyami Safa as well?

– No. Peyami Safa passed away on 15 June 1961. I was still a pupil at Kayseri High School at the time.

– What was Hüseyin Nihal Atsız's demeanour like? How did he treat the person opposite him? What were his gestures and facial expressions like, and how did he address people?

– Many people assume that *'one cannot approach Atsız; one does not even dare to greet him easily*'. Yet he treated me just as Galip Erdem did – and I spent a great deal of time with him; he was my guest at my vineyard, along with Sadi Somuncuoğlu and İbrahim Metin.

In 1971, Galip and I went on a three-month trip to Europe to raise funds for the party. Just as Galip was so humane, so was Atsız. In other words, Atsız had a very strong human side. Although Atsız might have seemed harsh and stern from a distance, he was actually very gentlemanly and courteous. I always felt I didn't deserve the way he treated me. He valued me far more than I deserved; indeed, his expression of his opinion about me during the judging of the Afşın Sançar writing competition, and his decision to leave the meeting despite Halide Nusret Zorlutuna's presence, must have been influential. I owe Atsız a great deal in terms of his gentlemanly conduct. I found him to be very courteous. He always behaved with courtesy. Just imagine: a young lad from Anatolia, and Mustafa Kayabek says to him, *'Come, let's buy you a coat. It's your first time in Istanbul,'* and off they go to Beyoğlu. I'm the one paying, but they buy me a coat from a luxury shop, and I've been wearing that coat for years. There are such arrogant people that most wouldn't even treat a young man from Anatolia as a proper person. Atsız wasn't like that at all. 'Are you Turkish? Are you a Turkist?' That was enough… That's what I saw in Atsız. He treated me as a Turk and a Turkist. And I tried to live up to that.

– What sort of person was Nejdet Sançar?

– We met through Atsız, as he was Atsız's brother, but I used to read all his articles that appeared in magazines. Just like

—they were both cut from the same cloth. Atsız may have been different as an older brother, but Nejdet Sançar was certainly no less than him. Both of them are among my idols, both in terms of their ideals and their dedication to their causes.

– Did you see anything different in Nejdet Sançar compared to Atsız?

– Let's put it this way: back in those years, during that period, I always sensed—or perhaps I wanted to sense—the sorrow of having lost the late Afşın Sançar in Nejdet Hoca; there was nothing like that in Atsız. But he was deeply saddened. I met Nejdet Sançar during those years, and although it wasn't really my place—and I hope this isn't seen as rude—I felt a pang of sympathy for him. Losing a child at such a young age is a very difficult thing; may God spare anyone from such a fate. Because my first three children were born, only to die two or three days later, so I only came to understand the pain of losing a child later on.

– Did you ever meet Mrs Bedriye?

– No, we haven't.

– Have you met Mr Atsız's children?

– No.

– We're all well aware of Atsız's passion for tea from what's been said. Would you like to say anything about that?

– Let's put it this way: Altan Deliorman was also at the **Milli Yol** offices on Nuruosmaniye Street. I remember he'd come along that day too. We had some tea. The tea arrived, but there were such important figures there—including İsmet Tümtürk, the son of Cenab Şahabettin, who was the owner of **Milli** Yol at the time. Two or three people

were there with Atsız; I can't recall now who those people were, nor can I say how I managed to drink my tea in their company – after all, I was just an 18-year-old lad from the countryside.

– Did Mr Atsız serve the tea himself?

– I don't know; I can't remember. My hands and feet were shaking. Can you imagine? All these great men – the İsmet Tümtürks, the Altan Deliormans, the Atsızs – just being there amongst them having a cup of tea… even now, when I think about how I drank it, my hands and feet go all wobbly. I feel very close to them.

– Well, do you have any interesting memories of your time with Atsız?

– Apart from the competition incident, there's nothing else. Because of me and Halide Hanım, a young man who'd come from Anatolia and was just beginning to make a name for himself with his writing, stormed out of the meeting. What can I say to such a person? I can't even describe him. He's simply such a towering figure in my eyes, far beyond my own standards. I practised hypnosis for a while, putting people to sleep. Once, back in '62–'63, we were publishing the **Devrim** newspaper. It had been bought from the leftists. That's why it was called **Devrim**. Whilst I was working on that paper, I sent a man I'd put to sleep to Atsız's house.

– (I was utterly astonished.) What did that person tell you?

– I sent him to Atsız's house, but he couldn't meet Atsız. He described the house, saying there was no one there. Necdet Çetinoğlu, who knew the house, was also there. He described the house, saying, *'Ask this person, ask that person.'* The subject under hypnosis was Mustafa Yıldırgan. I took Yıldırgan on a spiritual journey and sent him to Atsız's house. He described Atsız's house. He said there was no one there.

– Did Necdet Çetinok confirm that it was the right house?

– Of course, of course. He described the neighbourhood and the floor. He'd already described the inside of the house.

– Did you mention this incident to Atsız afterwards?

– No, no, I couldn't have… He'd have been angry with me then. It would have ruined our relationship with Atsız. (We laugh) I pursued this 'spiritual journey' business for a while, but later gave it up as it went against my religious beliefs.

– We know that Mr Atsız wrote a work on Turkish history and that this work has gone missing. Do you have any information on this? Have you heard anything?

– Yes, I've heard rumours. But I haven't been able to make sense of it yet. What is it? How did it happen? Was it an oversight? Was it deliberate? Was it stolen? That matter hasn't been clarified—or if it has, I'm not aware of it. I was very upset about it. I mean, for Atsız to write something like that and then for it to go missing. It was a very important work.

– Mr Atsız's religious views are a much-debated topic these days… Some say he was a shaman. Some say he was an agnostic. Others say, 'No, he was a Muslim.' What are your thoughts on this?

– For me, Atsız's Turkish nationalism is the primary concern. Religion is a feeling hidden within a person. I do not attach much importance to whether someone says 'I am a Muslim' or 'I am not'. It is what I perceive it to be. Everyone's faith is their own affair. I would not express the view that Atsız's religious side was lacking or incorrect. I don't know, it wouldn't be fitting for me. But Atsız was a great Turkic nationalist, and I am a disciple of that great Turkic nationalist.

– In recent times, many works concerning Hüseyin Nihal Atsız have been published. Have you had the opportunity to examine these works? What are your thoughts?

No. As I have known Atsız first-hand, I know him from the source; I know Sançar from the source; I know Türkeş from the source. For that reason, I have neither had the time nor felt it was my place to read the articles written about them. What has been written doesn't interest me much either. As I have lived with these people face-to-face and got to know them personally, the impressions they left on me remain the same as they were in the past. My religion is mine, yours is yours. My faith is mine, yours is yours. You shall not say a word against my Turkishness or my faith. Nor will I comment on yours; if you are a Turk and a Turkist in the sense I understand it, and I am a Turkist in the sense you understand it, then there is no issue. We are fellow travellers on the same path. Atsız is an idol to me, you see. Idols are not easily debated. Nor are we at a level where we can debate idols. Let me put it that way.

– Did you attend Atsız's funeral?

– No.

– We know that Mr Türkeş did not attend Mr Atsız's funeral. As someone who knew Mr Türkeş well, what would you like to say on this matter?

– Well, here's the thing. Türkeş was someone who came all the way to my wife's birth, right up until the birth of my child. I know Türkeş very well indeed. I also knew the late Muzaffer Yenge very well. He wouldn't neglect the funeral of someone like Atsız. If he had the opportunity, he would have attended. I think he must have attended. Someone who came to the birth of my child—an ordinary man like me—and even helped name my child; if he hadn't attended the funeral of a man like Atsız,

I would assume it is because he was unable to do so. If he had the means but did not go, the blame lies with Türkeş. This does not diminish Atsız; Atsız is Atsız, after all. Atsız is someone whose name lives in our hearts. He is someone whose name will never be erased from our hearts. We are Turks and Turkish nationalists. Atsız has given us so much. May God have mercy on Atsız, on Türkeş, and on Nejdet Sançar. Nejdet Sançar, in particular, who has experienced the pain of losing a child, has gone through very difficult times.

– In your view, what was it about Atsız that influenced Türkeş?

– Let me put it this way. Both were men who had lain in a coffin. Men who had endured equal torture under equal conditions. For that reason, their influence on one another could have been a source of moral support, or it could have been a hindrance. They might have grieved for one another.

You cannot make comparisons on these matters. In other words, a grape is a grape, a pomegranate is a pomegranate. Everyone has their own distinct characteristics; they are different. They are complementary to one another. They are, after all, fruits. These are idealistic people. The important thing is this: before Türkeş, Atsız, Türkeş, and, for example, Galip Ağabey (Erdem) and Dündar Taşer had a huge influence on me. They have left their mark on me, but of course I cannot say anything definitive.

– As someone who has served in the MHP for many years and knows the party well, what was Atsız Bey's standing within the party, both amongst the rank and file and the leadership?

– The MHP is a political party. It has political dimensions as well as ideological ones. People from all walks of life can be found within the party. Ultimately, it is a matter of votes. Who stands for what becomes clear at the ballot box. But from an ideological

perspective, people choose their ideology and, in terms of ideology, hold their idols above all else. Both Atsız and Türkeş are irreplaceable figures.

Turkey will never see the likes of Atsız again, nor Nejdet Sançar. Al-Parslan Türkeş will not return, nor Galip Erdem, nor Dündar Taşer. These are truly great figures.

– We know that you met Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti in person. As someone who stood trial alongside Atsız in the 1944 Turkism–Turanism case, did Serdengeçti tell you anything about Atsız?

– No, he didn't tell me anything. Serdengeçti was, by comparison, a man of divine stature. He was a different sort of man. A unique individual. He also holds a special place in my heart. He used to stay at our vineyard in Kayseri. Later on, Türkeş, Sadi Somuncuoğlu, Galip Erdem and İbrahim Metin all stayed at our vineyard. Atsız was the only one who didn't rest there – that is my greatest regret. I wish I'd had the chance to host Atsız at my vineyard.

– We never had the chance to interview Galip Erdem. May God rest his soul. As someone who knew both of them well, what can you tell us about the relationship between Galip Erdem and Mr Atsız?

– Galip Erdem, İbrahim Metin, Hasan Oraltay and I stayed in Germany for two and a half months to publish a party newspaper. We spent a long time together. We never spoke about Atsız Bey. Atsız is a mentor to everyone younger than himself. Regardless of age, he is the leader of every idealist. Galip Erdem is 'Big Brother Galip' to everyone. Everyone has their own unique circumstances.

– Do you have any information regarding the relationship between Dündar Taşer and Atsız?

– No. I've never heard anything against him. What I observed amongst my elders was this: there wasn't even a hint of slander against one another.

– We know that Mr Atsız received an offer to stand as an MP from the Justice Party. Did the MHP make any such approach?

– No, there wasn't. Nor would there have been. Because someone as staunchly Turkic as Atsız—or rather, people of that sort—simply cannot easily come to terms with politics. They cannot enter politics.

– What aspects of Atsız influenced you?

– I read about the events of 1944. It filled me with a deep hatred towards those responsible for the events. That hatred remains to this day. The coffins are still before my eyes. It was as if I imagined myself there. Atsız has always been influential in this regard. I looked at his writings, I looked at his poems. There are some of his writings that go like this:

'Mix the agony into your blood and drink it without batting an eyelid. Let a couple of bastards laugh behind your back—what does it matter? In this world of existence, you alone will have absolutely nothing—not even on your gravestone.'
10

Not everyone can write this. A man who does not believe in this and is unmoved by it cannot write this. This is Atsız, in a word. They all have their own distinct places; thank goodness they existed. The number we've mentioned does not exceed eight or ten, but the foundations of Turkism, Turkish nationalism, the Turkish nation, the Turkish state and Turkish philosophy lie in their ideals; we, too, are their disciples.

– Have you ever met Reha Oğuz Türkkan?

– No, I've only read his work.

– Thank you for giving me the opportunity to conduct this

interview.

– Thank you very much; I am the one who should be thanking you.

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10 Atsız, The End of the Roads, Ötüken Publications, 21st edition, 2017, Istanbul, p. 57

LOVING-MINDED

(7 May 2016, Adana)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I was born on 20 April 1942. I am 74 years old. One of our daughters, who is a maths teacher, said to me, *"Sir, for people like you who keep fighting, your age is calculated as half."* I was 68 at the time. She said I was 34. I replied, *'Look, I don't like maths. But I have respect for it as a science. Yet this is the maths formula I've liked the most.'* In the stories told at home during my primary school years, the Armenian issue was discussed most often, as was the French occupation. Also, my grandfathers had moved from Kozan to Yemişli. They'd come to our village on the Karataş road a few generations ago. But there was a story we used to hear at home: we'd taken part in the Kozanoğlu Uprising. That is, alongside the Dadaoğlu and Avşaroğlu uprisings – even those who weren't Avşars joined in; we were said to be related to the Kozanoğlu and Emmioğlu families. Of course, we lost the case. After rebelling against the state, my family kept our kinship with the Kozanoğlus a secret. I'd heard about it, but I wasn't aware it was being kept secret. There's a neighbourhood called Türk Ocağı. We were living there at the time. I'd go out with my mates to play sword games and such; every now and then I'd show off. 'I'm Kozanoğlu's grandson, whatever that means.' They'd heard that. I came home and my dad slapped me. 'What's happened*?'* I asked. *'Why are you saying that?'* he said. *'You were the ones talking…'* I said. *'But that's not to be said—it's to be kept secret,'* he said.

I thought it was a bit of a shame, too. From the stories I'd heard, I learnt that after that uprising, we had a relative in the province—they called him the 'letter-carrier'—and when the War of '93 broke out, a message came from Istanbul: 'Gather the rebels; they'll be in the front line as they head to the front.' Our postman uncle had also sent a message: *'Everyone should flee*; *do not join the mobilisation*.' Most of them fled and did not join the mobilisation. Naturally, this only compounded their guilt. I grew up in that sort of atmosphere. In my dreams, I would see the French occupying Adana, alongside the Armenians, and we were fighting them. I used to have dreams like that. I'd wake up in fear. I'd run and squeeze myself between my mum and dad. These dreams became so frequent and troubled me so much that even when I was in Year 9, I was still having them, still running to squeeze myself between my mum and dad. My uncle brought me an amulet. In the old days, they used to coat amulets with zinc. It was a large, thick thing. *'Put this under your pillow,'* he said, *'and you won't have any more of those frightening dreams.*' And indeed, once I'd put it there, I didn't have any more. Believe it or not. We grew up with these stories. My father's uncle would come round and say, *'This is how it was in the Greek War, that's how it was on the Iraqi front.'* My grandfather had fought in Yemen. What would you read? For example, Ömer Seyfettin's stories – I used to read those at primary school. After that, on the way to the former Provincial Government Building, small booklets were sold near the big clock. They'd compile accounts of the exploits of Ali at Kan Castle and the Pass of Khaybar into little books and sell them. We'd buy those. In fact, I'd even buy them in secret from my mum and dad, just in case they wouldn't let me read them. As a child who was keen on reading, I finished primary school. That summer of 1953, we were in the highlands near Niğde. People from Adana used to go up to the summer pastures in Niğde for a while. My uncle was reading a book and gave it to me. I saw the title was ***The Death of the Grey Wolves***. I wouldn't call anyone human who didn't find *The Death of **the Grey Wolves*** spellbinding. Indeed, they admit this themselves. In an interview with Baskın Oran in the 1980s, he said*, 'How can people be nationalists,*

idealists?" he explained, saying: *"There's a book called* ****The Death of the Grey*** Wolves*—it's *a magical book."* He added, *"Young people who read it first and foremost become nationalists.*" Apparently, some of them become revolutionaries, but I didn't believe that, of course. Of course, after reading that book, I swore I'd kill the first Chinese person I saw. That oath lasted a long time, particularly because of Captain Sançar's death. But I never saw a Chinese person. In the 1960s, a Chinese student came to Istanbul University to do a PhD. I said, *'I mustn't see her. Otherwise, I'll have to kill her. I've sworn an oath.'* One day, we were sitting in the faculty; I had my back to the door. I realised from the conversation that the Chinese girl had entered, so I thought, 'I mustn't turn round and look – I'd said I'd kill the first Chinese person I saw.' If I don't look, I won't see her. (We're laughing) That way, my oath wouldn't be broken. People said we'd end up breaking a bin or something. Then they said this girl was a Döngel—that is, a Muslim Chinese woman. It made no difference to me. A Chinese person is a Chinese person. That's a separate matter. After that, of course, the magazines that came to our house… My father used to subscribe to them. All the nationalist magazines published at the time. For example, ***Serdengeçti***. It might come out once a year, or it might not. It would say something like: *"The moment you pick up this magazine, my noose is ready. I'm definitely going to prison.'* We grew up with magazines like that. There was ***Toprak*** magazine, by Darendelioğlu. Its story is interesting. My mum said to my dad, *'Magazines are coming out; get one of them for Sevgi.'* So my dad went and bought ***Toprak*** magazine. I was, of course, absolutely thrilled. My mum said, *"I meant the ones that teach handicrafts."* My dad replied, *"Never mind those—you can teach her yourself."* There was an article in there that really made an impression on me. We have a famous wrestler—an Olympic champion, Gazanfer Bilge—and there was an interview with him. After the '48 Olympics, he was due to go to the '52 Olympics, but he couldn't. He'd contracted tuberculosis. His story struck me as so tragic. As I read on and on, I naturally started getting on the wrong side of my teachers at school. My father would bring back books every time he went to and from Ankara or Istanbul. I'd

read them during breaks. I'd take them to school; the book's

. My father had a primary school teacher. He had a collection. We could practically find even a single issue of a magazine published in '35 at Uncle Recep's house. Whenever we went to visit them, I'd immediately dive into the room where they were kept *and* start reading. My mother would get annoyed. *'Come out into the fresh air, my girl, and step on that red earth,'* she'd say. *'I'm not going to read these,'* I'd say. Uncle Recep, may he rest in peace, would say, *'Muazzez Hanım, leave her be—I've got four children of my own. Not one of them even looks at this. Let Sevgi read.*' And so I grew up reading literature. The year I was due to come to Istanbul, there was also the Abdulhamid affair. I had a row with my history teacher. It was in my final year of secondary school… I don't know if he was the 'Red Sultan' or what. *'Other writers don't write like that,' I* said. I took Professor Atsız's article, 'Abdülhamit Han Göksultan', to him. It had been published in a magazine called **Ocak** at the time. *'Who?'* she said; a woman came over and had a look. *'Oh, is that the notorious figure?'* she said. I got very angry when I heard that. Because, as is well known, according to what I'd read by that Peyami Safa, that's what they call communists. I thought, 'How can she say such a thing?' That woman was my teacher for the first time that year, in my final year of secondary school. In our day, we had exams in every subject. When it was my turn, I said to my friends, *'Look, this woman is going to ask me about the Second Constitutional Era. She wants to make me say "Red Sultan". But I won't say it.*' The other distinguished teachers—I'd always studied under them—knew just how keen I was on history. Sure enough, when I went in, those two teachers asked me other questions. The lecturer who was marking my exam asked about the Second Constitutional Era. In our day, you'd receive the questions, wait a while to think them over, and then the person who'd gone in before you would be called up to the blackboard. Anyway, that person left and they called me up. I answered the questions asked by the other two lecturers. Then it was my own lecturer's turn. *'The Second Constitutional Era,'* I said. I paused for a moment, and the woman was waiting for me. *"1923,"* I said, and she was delighted. She thought I'd said 1923. But I was just having a bit of fun. *"23 July 1908,"* I said. Without going into the 'Red Sultan' period

beforehand, I went straight to the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy. I walked out.

They aren't calling the person after me. There's been a commotion inside. When the friend who was in there came out, he said, *'They kept me waiting for half an hour because of you.*' My former lecturers told me they were saying they'd give me a 10, but this lecturer said, *'No, she didn't answer my question.'* They said, *'No, we've taught Sevgi before. We've known her for years. That sort of thing doesn't happen.'* Anyway, when my teachers stepped in, they gave her a 9 or a 10—something like that. That day I swore to myself, *'When I go to Istanbul, I'll find Nihal Atsız.*' It was such a big dream that even though I went on trips with my family, going to university was a really difficult thing for me. But in the end, that came true too. The New World witnessed two miracles. One was the Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus without a father. The second miracle was Sevgi Çöktü going to Istanbul to study. I went to Istanbul, settled in, and a few months passed with exams and such. Then it was time to meet Professor Atsız. I had friends from secondary school. We were staying in the same hall of residence. So there were some male friends of mine there too. I said, *'I'm going to the Süleymaniye Library.' 'What's there?'* they asked. *'There's a man called Atsız; I'm going to see him,'* I said. *'Do you know him?'* they asked. *'No,'* I said. *'I'm going to ask him something,'* I said. *'What are you going to ask?'* they asked. '*I'm not telling you*,' I said. I was going to ask about the 'Red Sultan–Blue Sultan' issue. I thought, 'These lot are ignorant; I'd better not get into a row with them.' Anyway, they came with me, but they said, 'We'll wait here.' We went to the Süleymaniye Library. I'd always known about it from magazines. At the Süleymaniye Library, they said, *'Yes*, *he was here, but now he's at the Istanbul* University *Library. He works in the manuscripts section.*' We turned round and went to the Istanbul University Library. My friends were waiting downstairs. I went upstairs. 'It's in this hall,' they said, so I went in. It really was a large hall… There were tables. There were manuscripts and such. Professor Atsız was working at a table. I recognised him from photographs. I went over to his table, but I didn't know how to address him. 'Professor' didn't occur to me; calling him 'Mr Nihal' struck me as a bit odd. Besides, the name 'Nihal' had always struck me as a bit odd. If I called him 'Uncle Nihal', that wouldn't do; if I called him 'Aunt

Nihal', that wouldn't do either. What

was at a loss for words, he looked up and said, 'Come in…' I also needed to come up with an excuse—why I was looking for him. I said, *'I have one of your books. I've come to ask if you'd sign it for me.'* But at the time, I didn't know that he was signing his books for people and distributing them to his acquaintances. I had no idea about that either. It was March–April of '61… *"Which book?*" he asked. ***"Türk Ülküsü*** [11]**,"** I said. *"Oh, is that so? Are you from Crimea?"* he asked me. I replied, imitating my own accent. (Turning his head sharply to the side) *'No,* I'm *a Yörük from Adana*,*'* I said. He said, *'I've got that book. Keep yours; I'll bring you some signed copies. Where are you studying?'* I told him. He asked, I explained. *'Do you have any friends?'* he asked. *'Yes, they're downstairs*,' I said. *'Bring them along one day*,' he said. *'All right,'* I said. We agreed to meet the following week, full of excitement. I flew downstairs. *Türk Ülküsü* was there. But at home; it was in Adana, that is. I went straight to the second-hand bookshops with my friends. I bought a **copy of *Türk Ülküsü*** from there. We came back home. I gathered the girls together. I said, *"You'll read this, you'll learn these things, and you'll listen to me*." I caused quite a commotion. I hit some of them. I slapped some, gave them a good thrashing and so on—it was all a bit of a free-for-all. One of them took what I was saying to heart. She was the daughter of a family who'd moved from Konya-Karaman to Rumelia. They'd settled in Adana. Mesrure, from our school, said, *'My family came here from Mostar too*.' *'You know, they'd left from here,'* she said. *'Let me have a look at this too…'* she said. There was Birsen Serezli. They lived in our neighbourhood. Her family had also come from Serez. It caught her interest a bit too. Anyway. We were mostly there with Mesrure to get our maths and physics books. Mr Atsız was looking through the manuscripts. Other people were also getting books from there or looking at the manuscripts. We couldn't look at the maths and physics books in our hands at all. We kept looking at Mr Atsız. *"He bent down, stood up, straightened* up…" and so on. Then

11 Atsız, Türk Ülküsü, Ötüken Publications, 2015.

Professor Atsız invited me to his home. We agreed on a date. *"If you have any other friends, bring them along too," he* said to me. *"All right, I'll bring whoever's available," I* replied. 'What's the address?*'* he asked. *'Feyzullah Street, number 9,'* I said. *'How do you know that?'* he asked. I replied, *'That's the address listed for all the nationalist magazines*.' I knew it from the magazines that had been published since the 1940s and 1950s. Atsız Hoca laughed heartily—may he rest in peace. *"All right,"* he said. We made the arrangement. I suppose he gave me his telephone number. We couldn't go on the agreed day, so I rang him. Once again, I didn't know what to say on the phone. Calling him 'Uncle' wouldn't do, 'Brother' wouldn't do, 'Sir' wouldn't do either, and I wasn't sure if 'Professor' was appropriate. Nothing came to mind. I just said something along those lines. We agreed on the following week. The following week, six of us went. One was Dr Zeki, a recent graduate; another was Remzi, who was about to graduate; they were all originally from Adana; and then there were Birsen, Mesrure, Altan Kıbrıslı and so on. We went as a group like that. When we got there, there were other people there too. Now a friend of mine from the hall of residence asks me – he's from Adana too – *'What are you going to do?' 'He invited us to his house, I don't know,'* I said. *'We'll have a chat, I suppose. We'll ask him some questions and he'll tell us about it.' 'Is he going to hold a seminar for you?'* he asks. I don't know; I didn't even know how a seminar was run. Everyone knows that now, but back then, it wasn't like that. Anyway, we went there completely clueless. We met them there. Mustafa Kafalı was a teaching assistant in the History Department… You know İsmail Hakkı Gökhun. He was studying at the Faculty of Chemistry. Kamil Ekmekçi was studying medicine. The professor had told them too that some people like us were coming. That's how we met in the next phase of the affair. Then, from their conversation, I realised they were calling him 'Hocam'. Since they were experienced, we felt more at ease once we'd learnt to say 'Hocam', of course. After that, it became the norm. We'd go to visit him every Wednesday. After finishing his work at Istanbul University, he'd head back to Süleymaniye. We'd go at 11 o'clock every Wednesday. Because the Professor's working day finished at 12. We'd go on

Wednesdays, stay for half an hour or so, then leave from there, from Süleymaniye

we'd walk all the way down to Eminönü. We'd see the Professor off onto the ferry from there, and he'd head to Haydarpaşa. Back then, there were no electric trains; they were coal-fired commuter trains. To get to the Professor's house between Haydarpaşa and Maltepe, you had to get on or off at the Maltepe stop. It took about an hour and a half. We'd made it a rule to do it that way. We'd go on Wednesdays. On some weekends, the Professor would invite us over for a meal. We'd go to his house for lunch.

– Well, what would you like to say about Hoca Atsız's literary persona?

– Now, when it comes to his novel-writing, there's no doubt about it. Historical novels, and even *__Ruh Adam__* are there. That's a distinct philosophical style in itself. His historical novel-writing is beyond dispute, in other words. I'd say his writings are absolutely superb. His poems are very beautiful in my view, though some have called him a second-rate poet. I've had my differences with them too. 'Sit down and write,' I'd say. But as for his style—whether in his poems, novels or essays—it cannot be as sharp as a sword. There was a man called Ibn'ül Emin Mahmut Kemal. He had very original ideas. He used to say, *'Atsız's pen dismounts the horseman from his horse.'* A marvellous saying… That's the sort of man he was. Later, in 1961, we experienced an incident. There was a law professor called Ali Fuat Başgil. The AP nominated him for the Presidency. It was a political incident; the military opposed it. Because 27 May was just around the corner. Out of fear, the man fled to Switzerland. Cemal Gürsel became President. When he returned to Turkey, he wrote an article at that time. The gist of his article: the Anatolian Nation… In other words, the Turks had come here and intermingled with various tribes. We have become a new nation. The Anatolian Nation. It was then that I learnt that Ali Fuat Başgil was of Circassian descent. Atsız Hoca wrote a reply to this, entitled **'The Gross Errors of an Ordinary Professor'** [12]. He was referring to me there. *'Just the other day, I was told that a university student I had mistaken for a Crimean was actually a Yörük from Adana'*—

12 Atsız, The Gross Errors of a Full Professor, Küçükaydın Press, 1961.

it is evident that Turkish identity has not been corrupted here." He is implying that the girl, whom I thought was from Crimea, turns out to be a Yörük from Adana. It was, of course, an honour for me to be the subject of such an article.

– What do you think of Mr Atsız's approach to history?

– Now, because of what he has written about his approach to history, no one can say a word. Not even Murat Bardakçı, the world's most arrogant man, can say anything—in his own words. However, the entire work on **Turkish history** written by Professor Atsız was lost at the time of his death. We have no idea where it will turn up, when it will turn up, or whether it will turn up at all. Naturally, we're eagerly awaiting it too.

– Did Atsız Bey ever mention this work to you?

– Of course. It went like this: in 1957, in ***Büyük** Doğu**, the Professor and Necip Fazıl had formed an alliance at the time. The Professor's articles appeared there. They were published under the pseudonyms Selim Pusat and Nihal Atsız. An article of his titled ***The Crusades Against Turkism** (**1944**)* [13]was being serialised. I'd say, *'Professor, finish that off.'* Kafalı would say, ***'Turkish History';*** someone else would say, *'Professor, **Ruh Adam**.'* These were the topics being discussed in the early 1960s—including **Ruh Adam**. The Professor would say, *'First, make up your minds amongst yourselves.'* That's how it was… Everyone knows that.

– Professor, is there an interesting incident you experienced with Mr Atsız?

– Let me tell you one of the most interesting ones. They are all cherished, sacred memories for me. Mustafa Kafalı and I had decided to get married – though there was a disagreement between us as to whether it was on this date or that date

13 Atsız had written the serial 'The Crusades Against Turkism' for the Büyük Doğu magazine between 6 March 1959 and 16 October 1959.

He left. I wanted it to be later. Professor Atsız resolved this disagreement. Professor Atsız never used to go to anyone's home, but he accepted our invitation to lunch. There was a restaurant in the Grand Bazaar called Şark Kahvesi. We had lunch there with the Professor. I've never heard of anyone else dining out with Hoca; perhaps there were one or two others. Another thing that sticks in my mind is that I used to drink a lot of water. One day he said, *'Almıla*, *do you have diabetes?' 'No,'* I replied. *'You drink too much water,'* he said. That's how I learnt that people with diabetes drink a lot of water. Atsız Hoca was a bit of a doctor anyway, as you know, having left medical school. Apart from that, for example, we have this memory. The 22 February coup attempt – we hadn't got married yet; in '62, I was living in the hall of residence. In the late afternoon, Mustafa Kafalı came to the hall of residence and said, *'A riot has broken out in Ankara; I'm picking up a couple more friends and heading to Maltepe—we're going to get Hoca out of his house.'* There were no mobile phones, and we didn't know where they were going, so I spent the evening in the dark. I must have been quite daring; I doubt I'd be able to do it now. It was about 2 o'clock, and there was no news at all – had the uprising been quelled? What had happened? Had Atsız Hoca been taken from his home? Had anything happened? Had they been arrested or anything? I know that Faruk Sümer had come to Istanbul during those days. He's Mustafa Kafalı's teacher. His father lives near our hall of residence, and he was staying at his house. I got Faruk Sümer's father's number from the 01 directory and rang him at 2 o'clock in the morning. I woke the man up. Just look at that nerve – it was the nerve of a fool. There is such a thing as bad manners, isn't there? We'd never even met the man. I told him who I was. I said, *'There was this situation; I haven't been able to get any news—have you heard anything? 'No*,' he said. I knew he was in contact with Atsız Hoca. *'I haven't heard anything. But* I *suppose that matter has been hushed up*,' he said. *'Thank you,' I* said. The next day, Kafalı turned up around midday. *"What have you been up to?"* I asked. Buğra was still a secondary school pupil at the time; he'd enrolled in Year 1 at the Austrian High School and was in Istanbul with his father. Our lot were heading there, and Buğra was there too. They had nowhere

else to go.

They'd been out and about until dawn, spending time in a morning café. He'd written *The End of the Roads*[14]earlier. Indeed, it was that very night when he said, *"Even the dogs will laugh at our loneliness."* [15]But how many years had that poem been written? For me, too, that night is the embodiment of that poem. They were left in the lurch. Then they'd made a decision. A plan had been hatched—'Let's rent a house, or a flat, whatever—but let's not tell anyone; for days like this, we'll move the Professor there straight away'—but it never came to fruition. Because our Turkic-nationalist crowd is, at the same time, a poor lot. A fund had been set up back then—there was no association yet—and everyone would contribute 10 lira a month; even that was useful, as it built up. Then, if someone had a problem, they'd take from it. Then they'd pay it back.

– Were you a member of the Turkish Nationalists' Association?

– No, I wasn't a member of the association.

– Professor, what was Atsız like at home?

– He was so easy-going, so witty, so polite, such a gentleman; there was none of *that 'man who dismounts the horseman'* air about him. Neither in his home life nor when we visited him. But when someone else came to visit, for example, or when there was a disagreement, you'd see that side of him. One day, a man came to visit him at Süleymaniye; whilst sitting there, the man started speaking against religion. Atsız Hoca said, *'Sir, why are you saying these things to me?' 'What's the problem*?' the man replied. *'Do you really think I'm the same as you? Am I an enemy of Islam? Am I an enemy of religion*?" he asked. *"You're telling me these things because you feel a kinship with me; please leave this place,"* he said. The man got up and left. He was, in effect, thrown out. Kafalı and I were witnesses to this.

14 Atsız, The End of the Roads, Ötüken Publications, 21st Edition, 2017,

15 Atsız, The End of the Roads, Ötüken Publications, 21st Edition, 2017,

Istanbul, The End of the Roads, p. 11

– Professor, in your view, what were Atsız Bey's distinctive qualities?

– He was a very patient man. He was a very determined and hard-working man. I mean, it's hard to put into words. He was a man who endured a great deal, yet I never once heard him complain. For instance, I had read many of his books, but I hadn't read *The **Night** of **the Sycophants***[16]. When they asked me, I said*, 'No, I haven't read it.'* Atsız Hoca had a copy and gave it to me. *'Read this, but read it as part of a book,'* he said. *'My father used to buy me all of them, but I suppose he hadn't come across this one*,*'* I said. *'It sold out the very day it was published*,*'* he said. The publisher suggested we reprint it. He didn't go ahead with it because people would say he'd written the book just to make money. I heard this from him personally.

– Professor Atsız, which foreign languages could he speak?

– That generation knew French well. Of course, they call it Ottoman Turkish, but we call it Old Turkish. He knew it very well, of course—well enough to read the manuscripts; he already had the Arabic and Persian necessary to understand them. But I think French was his strongest.

– Did you ever discuss the Events of '44 with him?

– We all spoke about them, of course.

– What did he tell you? About what happened, the coffins and so on…

– He was helping the horseman dismount, you see. He never spoke of his hardships at all.

– Did you meet Mrs Bedriye and her children?

– Of course. I only saw Yağmur at the funeral. There was a bit of a commotion there too. It was, of course, a rather unfortunate incident involving the Ülkücüler.

16 Atsız, *The Night of the Sycophants / Vitamin Z*, Ötüken Publications, 12th edition, 2015.

– By 'incident', do you mean with the MHP members?

– Yağmur stood up to them. Kafalı also said, 'Hold on *a minute, he was more of a father to them than to you.'*

– Have you met Nejdet Sançar?

– I haven't met Professor Nejdet. But Kafalı knew him very well. Because Kafalı is a graduate of Ankara University. Professor Nejdet was also in Ankara. After he came to Istanbul, he was unwell. They used to live on the floor above Professor Atsız. We didn't go up. Kafalı went up, but I didn't. His wife, Mrs Reşide, would come down.

– Professor, how did you come to be known as 'Almıla'?

– He gave me the nickname 'Almıla'; even now, the old Turkic scholars still call me Almıla. The Professor had a habit of doing that. He used to give nicknames to those he was fond of; he called Mustafa Kafalı 'Yamtar'. He called me 'Almıla' too. We don't know if he gave anyone else nicknames. I mean, from the Bozkurtlar group. In fact, sometimes, when he was talking about that book—who was related to whom—Atsız Hoca would turn to me and ask things like, *'Almıla, what was the name of Captain Yamtar's son?'* I'd blurt it out, and they'd laugh. Then, when we decided to get married, things changed. Because in the novel, Pars and Almıla get married, and Hoca said, *'Yamtar, from now on your name shall be Pars Yamtar*.' It was like a naming ceremony. He was so attentive that once, when I was suffering from a stomach ailment—an ulcer—he would have special meals prepared for me whenever he invited me to his home.

– Professor, in recent times there's been a great deal of interest in Atsız, and many works have been written about him. What are your thoughts on them?

– Of course, the more that is written, the better. But one

must be careful… Especially, one mustn't delve too deeply into the subject of religion.

Because we know that Professor Atsız was not an atheist. But Professor Atsız, alongside all his talents, had one trait: when he got angry, he couldn't control his anger. In other words, he'd get so angry about something that he'd blurt out, 'Philosophy belongs to Rome, religion to the Arabs.' Who knows what betrayals came to his mind. That is why one must not get into an argument with Atsız Hoca about his religious beliefs. Just as with other people. As we've said, everyone's faith is their own affair. You might think he believes that way. What does the One Above think of him? I say we'll see him in the next world.

– Those were my questions, generally speaking. Is there anything else you'd like to mention?

– Now, I sometimes come across incorrect information on this subject. Atsız Hoca's funeral was far, far more crowded than anyone had anticipated. Those who attended the funeral—predominantly young people, of course—did not place the coffin in the hearse. It was carried on shoulders all the way from Kadıköy to Karacaahmet. By the time the coffin reached Karacaahmet, there were still worshippers just emerging from the mosque. It was a huge crowd. There's also a famous saying from that funeral. You'll know it.

– Fethi Gemuhluoğlu's saying.

– Yes. When the imam said, 'In the name of a righteous man,' we witnessed something that described the Hoca, such as: *'Imam, Imam, since that prayer stone became a prayer stone, it has never seen such a righteous man*.'

– Thank you.

– God forbid.

NURETTİN PAKYÜREK

(7 May 2016, Adana)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I was born in Adana on 27 December 1931. My family are of Turkish origin on both sides. On my mother's side, my grandfather came from the Tolonoğulları royal family in Egypt; they settled here. Later, they moved here. They were descendants of the Çandarlıoğlu family who had been exiled from the Ottoman Empire. My mother's grandmother, on the other hand, was a cousin of Ziya Gökalp. She was a very beautiful woman; our late grandfather, İbrahim Efendi, married her. My mother's grandmother's hometown was Gence. Due to certain events in Gence, Hacı Osman Bey went there. He stayed there for quite some time. There, he married our grandmother, Yahşi Emine. That's the maternal side… On the paternal side, he was the son of an uncle and aunt of Ramazan Bey; as Ramazan Bey was a 'Bey', he took the lead. To manage religious affairs, in later years he entrusted the administration of the Kapalıçarşı—built by Mehmet Pasha and Halit Pasha—to our great-grandfathers in accordance with religious principles. This continued right up until the Republic. With the closure of the tekkes and zawiyas, this institution was also shut down. Control over that bazaar and the office of the sheikh was also taken away. Despite this, the family harboured no ill will towards the founders of the Republic. They named one of the children born during the Battle of Sakarya 'Gazi Mustafa Kemal'. That uncle of mine, as it happens, completed his secondary education at Kabataş High School

and became a student of our teacher Atsız. Ömer Şekerli – they all come from the Turkic nationalist camp.

As for me, I studied in Adana. Primary, secondary and high school in Adana… In Istanbul, I studied Advanced Journalism at the Institute of Journalism. At that time, our late teacher was working at the Süleymaniye Library. Leyla Bakkaloğlu was the library director. Despite all the trials and tribulations he had endured, she showed great kindness and support towards our Professor. She did not curtail the work he was to carry out there at Süleymaniye, referring to him as the head of research or an expert in a particular section. She granted him two months' leave, saying, *'Professor, go away and come back in two months. You should also make your own preparations.'* The Professor returned two months later. He saw that a lovely room had been prepared for him. They had placed books the Professor would appreciate there—literary and historical works, as well as works on the history of literature—arranging them to create a library for him and placing it at his disposal.

– How did you first meet Mr Atsız?

– My first meeting with Mr Atsız was when my uncle Mustafa Kemal—may God rest his soul—was going to Istanbul. *'Come, I'll take you with me,' he* said. I was in the third year of secondary school. *'Look, you're reading this Orhun magazine, aren't you? I'll take you to the great Turkish figure who publishes that magazine, our Professor*,*'* he said. We set off; I already knew Atsız from the magazines—whether it was *__Ötüken__* or *__Orhun__*. That's where I'd come to know him. *__Deli Kurt__* had just come out at that time. After that, we read *__Deli__* Kurt* and became admirers of the Hoca. In other words, driven by a voluntary spirit of service to his cause, we strove to be close to the Hoca.

– In what year did you meet him?

– It was 1946 or 1947. At the time, he was teaching at Haydar Paşa High School. He taught there for 1½ to 2 years. The

Democratic Party

came to power; as you know, they took offence at some of his writings. Later, around that time, as you know, there were the incidents involving the Hoca and Arif Nihat Asya – against the Freemasons.

(Emin Yarımoğlu interrupts here.)

–Professor, given your age, you were present alongside all those involved in the events of '44.

– Yes, that's right.

(Yarımoğlu continues.)

– It seems there's no one in Turkey who can analyse and explain the '44 events' better than you.

– There are, certainly there are. There are officers. There are generals, and there are military judges. There was a general who had served as head of the MIT for a time. He showed great sympathy for Atsız Bey's case and did everything in his power to ensure that excessive pressure was not applied; later, he wrote a very fine book entitled *__The True Face of Communism__*. He used the pseudonym Vecihi Bey. During this period, we would visit him at certain times so as not to disturb him. As you know, the Professor conducted very in-depth research into the history of the Sheikhs al-Islam and the Ottoman Empire. He subsequently found a great deal of peace and comfort there. He identified the errors in the **Orkhon** Inscriptions by the Danish scholar Thomsen and contributed to their correction. This is documented in Muharrem Ergin's work. Atsız Hoca is a relative of his. Later on, we began to meet with the Professor more frequently regarding this history. We would visit for an hour or two; if we had any questions, we would ask them, enquire after his well-being, and ask which sources we should read. Which organisations, institutions and societies were closest to us? In this way, we gathered information and chose our path.

– What was Mr Atsız's attitude and behaviour towards you and the young people?

– He was very approachable. He was a very courteous man. I was 19 or 20 at the time. He always addressed me as 'sir'.

– Did you engage in literary activities with Mr Atsız? Did you write for the same magazine?

– Yes, I did.

– Which magazines did you write for?

– I wrote for **Toprak** magazine; I wrote for **Ötüken** magazine. I wrote for other nationalist magazines. I did write under pseudonyms on occasion. I wrote for **Türkeli** magazine. I wrote for **Milli Işık**. Altan Deliorman insisted so much that I ended up writing for it too.

– You also put in a great deal of effort, alongside Mr Atsız, in the publication of Ötüken magazine.

– That's right. We published it together. Eight or ten of us covered the costs as well. What was Atsız Hoca's salary at that time?

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's literary work?

– İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal is a great historian. I've heard this from him myself, and I've come across it in some journals as well. When discussing Atsız's use of the Turkish language there, he gives it special mention. '*He would write articles as sharp as lightning, using all the features and magical beauties of the language without making a single spelling mistake; in some instances—let us say in his debates and polemics—he would use expressions so incisive they could bring a rider down from his horse, yet without resorting to insults, profanity or vulgar expressions.*'

says. We, too, have written poetry. Whether written in aruz or in hece metre… If you look at *__Ruh__ Adam*, written under the pen name Selim Pusat, you will find quatrains that flow seamlessly into one another. The Turkish in that work is a masterpiece of the Turkish language, and his works written in hece metre are in no way inferior to them. He has written rubais, albeit very few. Yet every one of them is perfect in its own right. If you are writing in a romantic or mystical style, the poems that best express the inner beauty that springs from the depths of the soul are to be found in the works of Atsız Bey.

– What are your thoughts on Atsız Bey's role as a historian?

– He draws on the most reliable sources for his historical work. He delves to the very depths.

– Do you have any interesting anecdotes about Atsız Bey?

– We've had many experiences involving Atsız Bey. When we went with Süleyman Ramazanoğlu, he was very keen to meet us there. *'We're reading* it*; Ötüken is coming*, *Nurettin Bey*,' he said. Atsız Bey has written beautifully on topics such as 'The Mendebur American' and on Turkism and the Turkish language.

– What were the distinctive aspects you observed in Atsız Bey?

– To be Turkish was to be Mr Atsız. Just as Mustafa Kemal Pasha holds a truly exceptional place in terms of politics and political history, so too did Mr Atsız. For instance, he left the Military Medical School in his third year. He was the most successful student. Let me tell you a story: I met a general who was a close friend of the late Atsız at Münir Nurettin Selçuk's funeral. Whilst we were chatting, he mentioned that he'd read my article. I mention Atsız in certain passages. Mehmet Barlas writes articles belittling Atsız Bey. In his entire life, not a single word

was spoken against him

—this man was Atsız Bey's pupil at Haydar Paşa High School. However, there is something amiss with him. He is also a fellow Gazianteplı, like you. The Paşa I met at the funeral *said*, *"I used to go to medical school with him. We'd meet up. Sometimes we'd even sit in on his lectures. I've rarely come across a man of such sharp intellect in my life*.' That's exactly what he told me. Namık Arduç, who was with us, also confirms this. *'I saw him too,'* he says. *'I knew him well and was in awe of him,'* he adds. This, then, is Hüseyin Nihal Atsız. He never wavered from his ideas or strayed from them for the sake of any worldly gain. Nor did he ever write a single sentence against anyone without first researching and verifying the facts. So what benefits did he bring us? We acted upon his advice and suggestions. Take, for instance, his poem **'Davetiye'** [17]—I believe it was written in 1936.

(Yarımoğlu is speaking.)

– It was written before the Second World War.[18]

– Of course, it was written earlier. What powerful writings, what powerful similes, what powerful insights it contains. He has placed such words precisely in their rightful places using pure, correct Turkish, and—as our teacher Mahmut Kemal İnal put it—he has crafted sentences there *that* 'will bring *the horseman* down *from his horse*'. Look at that **'Heroism'** [19]poem—it's four stanzas, isn't it? It's a four-volume work and is written in very pure Turkish. At that time, many people were using Ottoman-style compounds and constructions simply to imitate others. He used none of these. And the poems he wrote in aruz metre were also composed in pure and clear Turkish. He never wrote a single line without careful study and scrutiny… The poem

17 Atsız, Yolların Sonu, Ötüken Publications, 21st edition, 2017, Istanbul, Invitation, p. 27

18 The poem 'Davetiye' was written in 1940.

19 Atsız, *Yolların Sonu*, Ötüken Publications, 21st edition, 2017, Istanbul, *Kahramanlık*, p. 42

There is an emotional side to him. He has also written poems with a touch of sentimentality, written to be a little more moving and impactful from the perspective of a contemplative life. If you were to set those aside for a moment, all his poems are as clear and pure as water. They are as pure as the sparkling waters of a spring, untouched by human or animal hands, hidden away in the secret corners of the forests. The men simply stack the syllables one on top of the other; there is no rhyme, no refrain, and so on. Yet somehow, it becomes poetry. Now, this applies not only to Atsız Hoca, but also to the two great poets of the Syllabists. Orhan Seyfi Orhon and Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel. If you pay attention, you'll see that Turkey's enemies and the communists have always pushed these two poets into the background. Now, Mr Nejdet Sançar's Turkish is also crystal-clear, and he is a man who has written the history of the Italians without relying on specific documents or sources. There is one book on the truth about Nazım Hikmet, prepared by consulting specific sources, written by him, and another by Darendelioğlu. Take note of those closest to Atsız; this is also true in terms of style. Mr Alparslan Türkeş's Turkish, and what he wrote in Ötüken under the pseudonym Kazdemoğlu... The period between 1950–51–52, when the Democratic Party shut down the Nationalists' Association—of which I was also a member of the youth wing—imposing a 10-lira fine. That was a very critical period in Turkish history. What would happen? What kind of state ideology would prevail? How would the state's philosophy and the chain of beliefs take shape? These were very important matters. On this point, Mr Atsız took no one else's views into account. What is in the Turks' best interests? He would ponder this, weigh it up, and put the pieces in their proper place. That is how he wrote his articles. There is a remark he made to me in his article on Turkism. *'Write as if it were to be read fifty years from now,'* he would say. I asked, *'How are my articles*?' 'I *like them,' he* said. *'But you must be a little more refined and clear; you must write with fifty years' time in mind, or even a hundred years if necessary*,*'* he said. *'You're right, Professor*, *I'll take care*,*'* I said. *'That will be very good,' he* said then.

– What are your thoughts on the events of 1944? Although Emin asked this just a moment ago… Did you know any of those who were put on trial?

– Of course, Zeki Sofuoğlu was already a relative of mine—from Cemal Oğuz Öcal to Yusuf Kadıgil and İzzet Yolalan. There was one burly chap, Hamza Sadi Özbek, who was a good friend of mine. Hilmi Ziya Ülken is a left-winger. Through his advice, urging Ülken to place greater emphasis on the Turkic nationalist movement and conveying what he knew to him, he steered him away from left-wing thought and towards Turkic nationalist thought; he has written a book on the greatness of the Turkish race. The cover of that book also features a photograph of Hamza Sadi Özbek. Turks aren't actually that short, you see. Let me tell you about an incident that hasn't been included in books on the events of 1944. It was published as a serialised article in my column in *Hergün*. The editor-in-chief was Yücel Hacaloğlu. I do not like İsmet Pasha. Why do I not like him? Firstly, **the 19 May Speech**; secondly, these people had no connection with him whatsoever. In other words, there were no passages in Atsız Bey's letters that referred to İsmet Pasha. He wrote about these men being removed from the Ministry of Education and the Conservatoire, and about scrutinising the 'Kadro' members. I later examined these myself. I found the 'Kadro' journals. It was perfectly clear from those insidious and deceptive articles what misguided aims they sought to steer the nation towards. They kept going on and on about the people, about the people's socialism and equality. They took me away, and they took my father away too. When I saw the **Orhun** magazines… We were spared because ours was a well-respected family. I'd written to the magazine—signed as Nurettin Pakyürek or something—and expressed how much I admired Orhun. I think it was the issue containing the second letter. There was a police inspector called 'Çöp Bekir'; he gave me a sharp tug on the ear, asking, 'Are you letting yourself be poisoned by this stuff?' I was in the second year of secondary school. If I'd been a sixth-former, it wouldn't have mattered… What on earth is this, then? They'd bring them in and we'd read them. My father had a subscription. Back then,

these were considered criminal. We kept them for two days, then they let us have them back.

They didn't hand over most of the hundreds of books they found at home. That was the biggest loss. They even took the ones published by **'Young Turks'** and the like. *'Uncle Inspector*, *this is published for primary school children,' I* said. *'I read it sometimes too,'* I added. *'Don't let yourselves be poisoned by reading these,'* he said. I knew all of Mr Atsız's friends.

– Have you seen or heard of Mr Atsız's missing book, *Turkish History*?

– I have. I was there myself. That Yağmur—you know, Yağmur's son—that's the whole issue.

– Why did the rift develop between Mr Atsız and Mr Türkeş?

– To tell you the truth, it was a staged fight.

– Why did they do such a thing?

– They thought that certain religious groups, angry with Atsız, wouldn't vote for the CKMP. Then, when these people started gathering round Alparslan Bey, the Hoca became very annoyed with them; I was in Europe at the time. I came back just in time. The magazine had gone to press. He'd written it in a fit of rage because of the attacks by the Nurcu group. Sacks full of letters.

– Did you meet Bedriye Hanım? Did you meet her children?

– Yes, but I didn't speak to her much. She would sometimes come by and join in the conversation. There's no doubt about her Turkish nationalism. I mean, Buğra was in good health at the time. There was an air of ambiguity about him—in his demeanour, his conversations, his gaze, his behaviour—that man, Yağmur… After moving on to Munich and then Paris, he

changed even more. Right into the midst of the communists

. He began writing articles for Cumhuriyet. After that final article, Atsız suffered a heart attack and passed away. We went but couldn't see the Professor; he'd been taken to hospital. Refet Körüklü lived in the same block of flats. He was very upset about it. I know that. The funeral procession set off from Osman Ağa Mosque. We went.

– Did Mr Türkeş attend the funeral?

– No, he didn't. I told him to, but he didn't go.

– What did he tell you? What was his reason for not attending?

– *"My schedule is very busy," he* said.

– What was Mr Atsız's religious outlook?

– He wasn't an atheist, as some have claimed. Nor was he a Shamanist. He was the joker of the lot. There was İsmail Hakkı Gökhun, nicknamed 'Shaman'. Gökhun was the son of a mufti; his grandfather had been a mufti. His father was also a religious teacher. But at that time, Shamanism had only just emerged; may Allah have mercy on him, he'd read Abdülkadir İnan's work and then Radloff's book – I suppose that's where the influence came from. He presents it as a religion. In fact, it's not a religion; it's Shamanism. They hold feasts and celebrations. They have fun here too. It is a custom stemming from our old traditions, blended and intertwined with practices derived from Islam. By blending all these elements together, it becomes a sort of hybrid: part Shamanism, part the ceremonies and feasts passed down to us from the Arabs, along with their belief systems as they see them… Atsız Bey's faith was firm; he believed in Islam.

– Have you met Nejdet Sançar?

– Yes. He was more reserved. However, like his brother, he was a man who would not compromise on what he knew or his

beliefs. At Balıkesir High School

. He carried out very beneficial work, particularly regarding the Turkic nationalist movement, with students from Balıkesir and the surrounding area; he held educational and formative discussions with them, and there were a few doctor friends of mine among Balıkesir's leading figures with whom I spoke. Nejdet Bey's students—and indeed his entire teaching career—were marked by success right up to the end. For a time, he also taught literature at the Imam-Hatip High School.

– Did Atsız Bey give you a nickname?

– He used to call me 'Bozkurt'.

– Is there anything else you'd like to say about Mr Atsız?

– Mr Atsız was, without a shadow of a doubt, the greatest advocate of the Turkish language of the 20th century. He never compromised on his beliefs. Despite some people's attempts to portray Hoca as an atheist with slanderous accusations—as if smearing him with a stain of black tar—Atsız was a man who always defended national and religious sanctities, for instance in the articles he wrote in Kızıl Elma during the attacks on Islam by communists, such as when they attacked Mehmet Akif. When I went to see him with the late Süleyman Abi, he was very curious… We said we'd be back in two hours, but it ended up taking fifteen or sixteen. He wouldn't let us leave either. Thank goodness he didn't. We said, 'Hocam, *we'll take you all the way to Adana. We'll visit all the Turkmen tribes. We'll go to all the plains. As long as your health permits. Would you accept this?' 'My word, no one has ever offered me such a worthwhile task,' he* said. *'They're talking openly, Professor,'* I said. *'We're keeping them quiet about you. We're tearing them to shreds,' I* said. *'But we need to put an end to this with a raid,'* I said. *'As long as your health permits, we'll definitely ensure you speak at major political gatherings and large meetings. We'll discuss this with Mr Alparslan; he won't let us down*

I reckon," I said. *"Very well,"* he said. I've travelled all over those parts. I've always observed certain subtleties here. Because there's a lack of guidance, and because the fundamental issues of the Turks are pushed into the background, things proceed directly; and if you were to say that your Kızılbaş or Alevi beliefs amount to atheism, it simply wouldn't fly. There is a book by Cevdet Türkay. In the days immediately following 27 May 1960, Mr Türkeş had a two-volume edition printed of the book *__Turkmen Tribes and History__*, which Mr Cevdet had compiled. Another book published within those six months, at the request of Mr Atsız, was the memoirs of Pasha Kazım Karabekir, *__Our War of Independence__*. This, too, was the work of Mr Alparslan. Those who sought to cast a dark stain on Mr Atsız's reputation have instead cast a dark stain upon their own faces. You are approaching a subject that is as vast as an ocean. Atsız Bey is one of those individuals—those 'khans without a throne'—from whom the most exceptional light of Turkish history, the Turkish world, Turkish morality, the potential of Turkicness, the traditions of Turkicness, the courtesy of Turkicness and the nobility of Turkicness radiates in every direction, shining as brightly as the sun. Let me put it this way. Let them know this. He prayed. When the eldest son of İsa Yusuf Alptekin died… Türkeş Bey was there too.

– Indeed, before he himself passed away, Refet Körüklü had recited the Qur'an at Atsız Bey's bedside.

– Mr Refet is a very old friend of mine. Apparently, he was reading from the Qur'an, and Mr Atsız was repeating after him. Mr Refet told me about it too. We didn't manage to make it. A number of incidents took place at his funeral. The point that annoyed me there was that Yağmur said to the Turkish nationalist youths and the Ülkücü youths, *'What are these people doing here?' 'What are you doing here?'* I asked. *'Why don't you go to Paris and write articles for magazines that oppose Turkishness?' I* said. She got angry. *'Sir, this is our father,'* she said. When I replied, *'He's no longer your father*,' Fethi Gemuhluoğlu suddenly appeared and said, *'Anyone who calls Atsız Bey an irreligious person is themselves*

irreligious.' 'He who recites the Shahada. The Amentü

and the Qur'an, and attends important religious gatherings—no one can call such a person an irreligious person, and I am someone who has seen him perform his prayers. Not once, not five times, not ten times," he said. That's how it was. In other words, these people had driven him to the brink; there were letters from the Nurcu followers, phone calls, and all sorts of insults. The Hoca had reached this point. One day I rang *him and* said, *'Hoca, I'd like to seek your guidance on a matter. Would you be available?'* I asked. *'Mr Nurettin, I'm very angry right now,'* he said. *'Hoca, what's the matter?'* I asked. *'Is this the "Tahife-i Nur" or Bediüzzaman's followers? I mean, phone call after phone call… I have abandoned my Turkish identity and set aside the issues of the Turkish people to side with Bediüzzaman the Kurd, who has been hostile to Turkishness for years. He may have carried out some beneficial activities during the final years of the Ottoman Empire in one or two instances merely for show, but why should I forget his previous acts of treachery? At the first opportunity, once he regains strength and finds the climate favourable, he will do the same again. 'That's why my spirits are very low,'* he said. *'Professor*,' I said, *'tomorrow or the day after—whenever you'd like?' 'I've got a meeting tomorrow; come along one day and we'll have a proper chat,' he* said. Anyway, the lads never left the Professor alone. They didn't leave us any chance. Faruk Çil, Adalet Ergenekon, Abdulhalûk Çay and, of course, Gökhun – whenever he came, he never left him alone. They'd rush over to the Professor… *"Come on," I said, "Ismail, he's writing history; let's give the man a bit of a break. 'Let him write over a long period of time, with a fresh mind,'* I said. You know how it is—people just won't leave a man alone. Once he picks up a pen or sits down at the typewriter, he won't stop until he's finished. Only when he hesitates on a single point does he pause—for five minutes, fifteen minutes—and then he carries on writing. He'll find it. He was that sensitive and meticulous by nature. He was a man who didn't hurt others and didn't look down on historical figures. Just as he described in ***Türk** Ülküsü*. Leyla Hanım told me, *'Full professors would come, but they wouldn't sit down until Atsız Bey told them to sit, even as guests*.'

– Which Mrs Leyla?

– The director of the Süleymaniye Library, Professor… Atsız was the sole individual in the 20th century who, through the Turkish nationalist ideal, acted as both its standard-bearer and, using a binding agent comprising the holiest beliefs, the holiest understanding and the concept of honour, united and harmonised both its essence and its foundation. And let me say this as my final word. I have written an article on Atsız. It is twelve to fourteen pages long. It is one of the articles that touches upon the most important points regarding Atsız. To understand Atsız is to understand the Turk. That is my final word. May he rest in peace.

– Thank you for your time.

– You're welcome.

PROF. DR. NECMEDDİN SEFERCİOŠLU

(23 May 2016, Ankara)

– Could you tell us a little about yourself?

– As you know, I am 85 years old. I have now lost many of my faculties. One of my ears cannot hear at all. One of my eyes cannot see at all. Many things in my memory have also vanished. Under these circumstances, I'm trying to get on with things. I don't even know how far I'm getting or how far I've come. I also suffer from a slipped disc. That's why I can't step outside our flat's front door. I'm under a sort of house arrest. Everything is difficult in this situation, but I have no other choice.

– When did you first meet Mr Atsız?

– I think it was in the early 1960s… I also tried to find and study many of Mr Atsız's works, and to collect books about him. To mark the fortieth anniversary of his death, some very valuable and important books were published. They are all works of 400–500 pages. I tried to introduce them in *__Türk Yurdu__*.

Mr Atsız was a great scholar whose worth was not recognised or appreciated in Turkey. He is misunderstood. Those who did not know him regarded him as a gruff, harsh man. Yet whenever I went to Istanbul, I would visit him at the Süleymaniye Library or at his home. We would meet and talk. He was a very polite, courteous, witty, knowledgeable and cultured gentleman of Istanbul. In some of his writings

I never sensed the harshness sometimes attributed to him in his conversations. The things he found harsh and could not tolerate in his writings were words and behaviours directed against Turkishness and Turkism.

Mr Atsız used to live in a wooden house at No. 9 Feyzullah Street in Maltepe. In his later years, he moved from there to Bostancı. It seems Mr Nejdet had a plot of land there, which they had handed over to a building contractor. Most of the flats in the new building had been bought by Turkish nationalists. Atsız Bey was one of them. He moved there once the building was finished. I visited him there as well. His flat was crammed with cupboards that couldn't quite hold all his books. Nejdet Bey had also retired and moved to Istanbul, settling into the flat next to his. There were other Turkish nationalists amongst the owners of the flats there. One of them I can recall was Muzaffer Eriş. Neither Mr Nejdet nor Mr Atsız, unfortunately, were able to live in those homes for very long. In 1975, Mr Nejdet passed away in one of the first months of the year, and Mr Atsız in December.

– You have also written a book about Mr Nejdet. Is there anything in particular you would like to tell us about him?

– Nejdet Bey was five years younger than Atsız Bey. It was his elder brother, Atsız Bey, who had inspired him to become a Turkist. He had wanted him to read Dr Rıza Nur's work *__Turkish__ History*, saying, *'I'll give you money for every volume of this.'* Nejdet Bey took the book and began reading it. He devoured the twelve-volume work as if it were water. In the end, Atsız Bey tried to give him the money he had promised. However, he refused to accept it. He had enjoyed the work so much that he turned down the money. Thus, he took his first step towards becoming a Turkic nationalist. In other words, that work was the reason he became a committed Turkic nationalist.

In the brief profile you mentioned, I have merely provided a short biographical sketch and endeavoured to present a comprehensive list of his articles.

I am not certain that the list covers all his articles. This is because Mr Nejdet published numerous pieces in a wide variety of publications. He was a prolific writer. Mr Atsız also wrote many articles, but Mr Nejdet would provide his writings to anyone wishing to publish them. For this reason, it was quite difficult to obtain some of his writings. In other words, there is a need for serious studies that evaluate Mr Nejdet's biography and, more importantly, compile his articles. Due to my age and the circumstances I find myself in, I am no longer able to undertake this myself. This should be regarded as a task awaiting the attention of young Turkish nationalists.

– Were there any differences or similarities between Nihal Atsız and Nejdet Sançar?

– In my view, Mr Nejdet was a very active man. I suppose Mr Atsız was not quite as active. It is not really possible for me to say whether that was actually the case or not. As I said, I could only visit Mr Atsız from time to time. Apart from those occasions, it was not possible for me to see him or become familiar with his character. But Mr Sançar was more outgoing and more inclined to establish relationships with groups. He was also a very jovial man.

That said, both of them would react with the same intensity and firmness towards opponents of Turkish nationalism. When faced with such a situation, they would pay no heed to friendship or camaraderie and would not back down from their words.

– As a writer yourself, what would you like to say about Mr Atsız's literary and historical work?

– Atsız Bey has 30 published research papers. All of them relate to history; specifically, Ottoman history. Everyone assumes that, as a Turkic nationalist, he published works on Turks living outside the Ottoman Empire. However, this is not the case. Atsız Bey was a scholar who generally worked to shed light on Ottoman history. His

works on the Turks are his historical novels: *__The Death of the Grey Wolves__* and *__The Grey Wolves Rise Again__*. All three of his novels deal with Ottoman and recent Turkish history: *__The Mad Wolf__*, *__The Night of the Dalkavuks__* *and* *__Vitamin Z__*. In all his other works, he undertook various studies by locating books written by scholars of the time during the period of the Ottoman Empire's existence in libraries, examining and analysing them, and adapting them into modern Turkish. Although he was a secondary school literature teacher, he was compelled to work for a considerable period at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul. He took advantage of this situation to scour Istanbul's libraries, locating and examining works relating to Ottoman history, adding useful notes, and translating them into modern Turkish for publication. Had his life permitted, he would certainly have undertaken further research. He was such a meticulous and hard-working scholar. Although he was a literature teacher, he had devoted himself to historical research. The greatest loss following his passing is the loss of his work *__Turkish__ History*, which he had prepared and which we know was intended for young people.

– Who do you think might have taken this work?

– Unfortunately, this is not known. His own children say, 'We never came across such a work in his home.'

– Did you see that work? Did he mention it to you?

– I recall seeing the drafts of that work in a folder. Many people who were in contact with Atsız, who spoke and met with him, also know that the book was being prepared. But the work vanished after his passing. What happened, and who did what, remains unclear. There were several stages in the preparation of that book. It was first conceived as a comprehensive, multi-volume work, but the decision was later made to scale it down; it was intended to be a work of medium scope

; finally, it was decided that it should be a work aimed at young people. In other words, this is the lost text…

– 44 What would you like to say about those events?

– It is not possible for me to comment on that matter. At the time, I was a pupil at Nevşehir Secondary School. Not even a proper newspaper reached Nevşehir. The radio, the only audio broadcast medium, could only be accessed at certain times of the day. Moreover, Ankara Radio—Turkey's only radio station at the time—did not carry any information regarding such events. Even if we had heard such news, we would not have been able to make sense of it, given our age.

– Were you able to attend Mr Atsız's funeral?

– The day the late Mr Atsız passed away was the eve of the 1975 Ramadan Bayram. It was impossible to find tickets for any buses or trains heading to Istanbul. For that reason, I was unable to travel to Istanbul to attend the funeral. I had to content myself with calling his home and offering my condolences to his youngest son, Buğra Atsız, who answered the phone.

– What were Mr Atsız's distinctive qualities?

– It was difficult for me to judge him. Because during my visits, which could be quite sporadic, we would only stay with him for an hour or two, or even less. However, in answer to your question, I can say this: anyone could visit him quite easily. No one ever said, *'Let's make an appointment in advance'* or anything like that. Of course, this was not how things should have been. People would turn up unannounced without even wondering, *'Does he have time to see us or talk to us?'* I never heard of him turning anyone away or refusing a visit by saying, *'I'm busy*.' Other like-minded comrades generally say the same thing. He welcomed everyone who came to visit him

. He would devote his time to them. In my opinion, had those visits not taken place, he might have found the opportunity to produce even more works. Unfortunately, he spent a large part of his time on such unannounced, unscheduled visits.

– What was discussed during those visits?

– Those who came would speak on matters relevant to their own fields of work and thought. They would answer Atsız Bey's questions. Furthermore, the state of the Turkish nationalist movement at that time would be discussed and debated. Answers would be given to the questions posed to Atsız Bey on this subject.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's religious beliefs?

– I cannot comment on that matter. Have you met with Mr Yücel Hacaloğlu?

– I shall meet him.

– You can obtain more information from him on this and other matters. He had very close ties with Mr Atsız whilst in Istanbul. They had also corresponded whilst Mr Yücel was in the military. You can obtain a great deal of information about Mr Atsız's personal life from him.

– Which foreign languages did Mr Atsız know?

– I believe he was proficient in Arabic and Persian. I can also say that he knew French, as he had started primary school at a French school. Furthermore, it stands to reason that he would have studied the same foreign language at secondary school, sixth form and university. However, I do not know the extent of his proficiency. But, as I mentioned earlier, one must not forget his mastery in translating at least thirty Arabic and Persian works into

Turkish.

– What would you like to say about the works published recently concerning Mr Atsız?

– To mark the 40th anniversary of his passing, some valuable books have been published. Beautiful, valuable, substantial books. It is wonderful that he has not been forgotten… Neither he nor the 'cause of Racism-Turanism' has been forgotten.

Over the last few years, a number of very serious and fine works on Atsız have been published. Talât Ülker's ***Hüseyin Nihal Atsız*** [20](373 pages), Hayri Yıldırım's ***The Last Turkist Atsız*** [21](692 pages), Osman Fikri Sertkaya's ***Hüseyin Nihal Atsız*** [22](206 pages), Serkan Akgöz's ***Atsız in the Press***[23](398 pp.), Yücel Hacaloğlu's ***Atsız's Letters*** [24](2nd ed., 440 pp.), Kağan Bahadır Küçükalcan's ***Atsız: The Icon of Every Era***[(25) and]Atlan Deliorman's ***Atsız: His Life, Views** and* **Works*** [26](265 pp.). The work by Nergishan Tekin, a Turkic scholar from Uzbekistan who emigrated to our country in 2001, entitled ***Nihal Atsız*** [27](432 pp.), is also one of the most intriguing works on Atsız published in the last two years.

In recent years, a number of important books have also been published on the 1944–1945 Racism and Turanism Trial, one of the milestones of the Turkish nationalist movement. One of these is the book ***Interrogations and Defences*** [(28)](592 pp.), which presents the transcripts of the interrogations and final defence statements of the 14 Turkish nationalist defendants in that famous trial. Ya-

20 Talat Ülker, *The Fierce Voice of Hüseyin Nihal Atsız Harşit*, Bilgeoğuz Publications, 2015.

21 Hayri Yıldırım, *The Last Turkic Nationalist Atsız*, Togan Publications, 2013

22 Osman Fikri Sertkaya, *Hüseyin Nihal Atsız: His Life and Works*, Ötüken Publications, 2014.

23 Serkan Akgöz, Atsız in the Press, Bozkurt Bookshop, 2016.

24 Yücel Hacaloğlu, Atsız's Letters, Ötüken Publications,

25 Kağan Bahadır Küçükalcan, Atsız: The Icon of Every Era, Aygan Publishing, 2015.

26 Altan Deliorman, Atsız: His Life, Views and Works, Berikan Publishing, 2013.

27 Nergishan Tekin, Nihal Atsız, Kariyer Publishing, 2015.

28 Yavuz Bülent Bakiler, Interrogations and Defences in the 1944–1945 Racism–Turancism Trial, Turkish Literature Foundation Publications, 2010.

The texts in this work, prepared for publication by Yavuz Bülent Bakiler, were actually compiled by the late Nejdet Sançar, who entrusted them to Yavuz Bülent Bakiler for subsequent publication. In fact, there were 26 defendants in the famous trial. Mr Nejdet was able to obtain the texts from 14 of them. The book contains the interrogation and defence statements of these 14 individuals. Furthermore, Hayri Yıldırım has also published a book on this subject entitled *__The Events of 3 May 1944 and the Racism and Turanism Trial__ [29]* (536 pp.).The work entitled *__The 1944–1945 Racism and Turanism Trial__* [30]also incorporates the trial information serialised in *__Orkun__* magazine. This text was published in *__Orkun__* magazine in the early 1950s. I always wondered why it was not published as a book. For it was a serialised account enriched with information obtained from the defendants in that famous trial. It aimed to provide a day-by-day account of the events following 3 May 1944. However, it had to be cut short. It has only now been possible to publish it.

In all these works, Mr Atsız took centre stage. Thus, both the great Turkic nationalist Atsız and the topics of the Racism-Turanism Trial have taken their place amongst the unforgettable.

– Is there anything else you would like to say?

– Whenever I get the chance, I try to write something for the magazine – *__Türk__ Yurdu*. There is no particular point I wish to emphasise.

– Thank you.

– I thank you.

29 Hayri Yıldırım, 3 May 1944 Racism and Turanism Trial, Togan Publishing, 2015.

30 Ed. Murat Yılmaz, The 1944–1945 Racism and Turanism Trial Serial, Umay Books, 2017.

PROF. DR. MUSTAFA KAFALI

(23 May 2016, Ankara)

– Could you tell us a little about yourself?

– I am currently 84 years old. I have two identity documents: one dated 1931 and the other 1937, but I started primary school in 1941, so my date of birth is probably 1933. My father was a judge and my mother was a teacher. In her own words, she was a 'muallime'. She graduated from teacher training college in 1913. My father, on the other hand, graduated from the Faculty of Law in 1905. So I am almost the same age as my parents' grandchild. When I was born, my father was 50 years old. I attended secondary school in Konya. I also attended secondary school there. It was a boys' school, but we studied together with girls. I went to Ankara. My father, my uncles and my brothers were all lawyers. I went to the Faculty of Law. I went there, but there was a professor of constitutional law called Bülent Nuri Esen. We had a row during an exam and I was forced to leave. I went to the Faculty of Languages and History. I graduated from the History department. Then one of our lecturers was going to take me on. The thing is, after I finished Languages and History, Akdes Nimet Kurat couldn't find me a permanent post. In the meantime, an exam had been announced in Istanbul. I went to sit that exam alongside Zeki Velidi Togan. Who was with me when I sat that exam? Mehmet Eröz, Necmettin Hacıeminoğlu—Necmettin Hacıeminoğlu, alongside Ahmet Caferoğlu—I was with Z. V. Togan, and Mehmet Eröz was also there, though I can't recall his name now

He enrolled in the Faculty of Economics under a professor. He, too, was a professor filled with admiration for Atsız. That is how our friendship began.

– How did you meet Mr Atsız?

– We went to Istanbul in 1959–1960. Ever since my youth, I'd always been fascinated by Mr Atsız. Whilst in Ankara, we were always in the company of Professor Nejdet – Mr Atsız's brother. So I went to see him. After that, he wouldn't let us go, and I became one of his closest associates. In fact, that's where my wife and I met.

– Yes, Professor Sevgi mentioned it.

– We met at his home. We saw each other there. Hoca worked at the library; we used to go to the library all the time to visit him. At that time, Atsız Hoca's old house was there. He had recently moved out of there. They bought a flat for himself and his brother. But at that time, Professor Nejdet passed away. Professor Nejdet had a son. He was one of those who died young. Professor Nejdet's world was plunged into darkness. Professor Atsız was also angry with his sons because they were not following in his footsteps. He was the same.

– Did Atsız Bey attend your wedding?

– I don't recall. Because the wedding took place in Adana. For that reason, I don't remember at all.

– As a historian yourself, what would you like to say about Atsız Bey's character as a historian?

– Atsız Hoca was not only a historian; as a student of Köprülü, he was also a linguist, literary scholar and historian within the Köprülü school,

geography and sociology—in other words, all of these form a single whole; in Atsız Bey's school of thought, and consequently, Atsız Hoca was equally proficient in all of these fields.

– What was the nature of the relationship between Zeki Velidi and Atsız?

– There was no issue between them. However, Zeki Velidi had a rather peculiar nature. He was a man who could not bear to speak to anyone. I was the only person doing a PhD under him. He taught for so long.

– What, in your view, were Atsız Bey's distinctive qualities?

– Now, those who knew Atsız Bey say this: of course, they always remember him for the speeches he made whilst angry and furious. Yet Atsız Bey was a man of great honour. He was such a man of honour that whatever we say is meaningless. It's impossible to explain; we'd always make light of the situation. We experienced all of that. But Atsız Hoca was a man of very civilised views. He was a gentle man. It was only when the cause came into play that his strong words would begin.

– What were Atsız Bey's mannerisms and behaviour like?

– Atsız Bey was a man almost as old as our own fathers. He treated us very well. May God rest his soul. Two people were given names. One was given to me, and the other to my wife. My name was Yamtar. Yamtar, as you know, is the burly character in the novel *__The Grey Wolves__*. As I was also well-built, I became Yamtar. My wife became Almıla.

– How did he come to give you that nickname?

– Well, he always called me Yamtar.

– It's said that Mr Atsız knew five or six foreign languages, particularly on social media.

– That's true.

– How many languages did he know?

– The Professor knew Arabic and Persian. He knew French. Apart from these languages, he was able to read and interpret ancient texts. He was a person who had a command of all the dialects of Turkish.

– As someone associated with all of them—be it Zeki Velidi, Atsız Bey or Nejdet Sançar—what did you discuss regarding the events of '44?

– During the '44 events, we were at secondary school. Of course, the men of İsmet Pasha's era—Hasan Ali Yücel and Tandoğan—were all his men. They remained in power until 1948. In '48, Şemsettin Günaltay became Prime Minister; he was even older than İsmet Pasha. It was Şemsettin Günaltay who established the Faculty of Theology and the Imam Hatip schools. Although it is often claimed that these were opened during the Democratic Party era, that is not the case; we know better. We lived through it. During the Democratic Party era, between 1951 and 1953, we had our Nationalists' Association. We were there together with Sefercioğlu. Ultimately, so many incidents occurred that, over the two years from 1951 to 1953—it was founded in April 1951 and closed in April 1953—

– Were you a member of the association?

– Yes, I was a member from Konya. The late Celal Bayar said on this matter, *'I share the same view as Ismet Pasha.'* Even Menderes used words in line with that. We were not held in high regard even during the Democratic Party era. When our association was closed down in 1954, Osman Turan said, *'Let's all join the Turkish Cultural Association. Since they've closed our association."* This time, the entire nationalist contingent from the Turkish Nationalists' Association in Ankara moved to the Türk Ocağı. The same thing happened in Istanbul. In fact, in 1958, the Türk Ocağı's headquarters were in Istanbul. Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver and his colleagues came and announced at the congress that the headquarters had been moved to Ankara. They resolved the matter by electing Osman Turan as chairman.

– Professor, do you have any information about those who were imprisoned during the events of '44?

– Well, most of those 38 people—including Türkeş—were put in the 'coffin cell'. Many were imprisoned there. But Atsız Hoca did not say that he himself had been put in the 'coffin cell'. Of course, he remained in prison. They also took the younger members who had gone too far and put them in the coffin cell. It wasn't the elders—such as Zeki Velidi or Atsız Bey—but the younger members who were put in the coffin cell.

– I had heard a rumour that Atsız Bey had lost his sense of smell because he had spent so long in the coffin cell.

– There's no such sensitivity, but after 1948, both Atsız Bey and Nejdet Bey were removed from their teaching posts during Şemsettin Günaltay's time. They were assigned to the library. They worked in the library. They became librarians. I wonder if I've made myself clear?

– What would you like to say about the tribute being prepared for Mr Atsız?

– It was 1974. Atsız Hoca was turning 70. We were at our home in Istanbul. There were four of us there at the time. My wife came in. She was bringing and taking away tea. She said, *'Atsız Hoca is turning 70. Aren't you thinking of doing anything at all?"* When she said that, the four of us sprang into action and decided to prepare a gift for Atsız Hoca. We set about preparing a book as a gift for Atsız Hoca, but he was a rather sensitive man. Mehmet Eröz and Necmettin Hacıeminoğlu said, *"You're closest to Hoca. Go and ask Hoca. Is there anything he'd like or doesn't want?"* I replied, *"All* right…" I went to Atsız Bey's house. We were talking with Atsız Bey. When I explained the situation, he blushed. *"Come now, I'm not a professor, I'm no great man,"* he said. I said, *'Hoca, you're the teacher of us all; put those titles aside. Our respect for you is so great that we'd like to present you with a gift.'* To which *he* replied, *'I'm not that important a figure,'* and laughed it off. So I asked, *'Is there anything you'd like or wouldn't like*?' He said, *'There's my brother-in-law, Mehmet Kaplan—just don't let him be disgraced, whoever else it may be.'* He didn't care for Mehmet Kaplan at all. He was his brother-in-law. Mehmet Kaplan was also one of the former professors. At that time, his children weren't with him either. His wife and children were in Germany. When I asked, "*Shall we involve them in this matter too?*", he said, *"Don't even bother…" "I'm done with my own family, especially my eldest son."* Just then, there was a knock at the door; in fact, Professor Nejdet's wife lived in the building upstairs. She was the one bringing and taking away the tea. The door opened. Tevetoğlu arrived. Tevetoğlu said, *"Professor*, *I've come from Germany*." When he mentioned his wife's and sons' names, his face turned pale. He said, *"There's no need to tell me their names. It's over as far as I'm concerned."* Tevetoğlu fell silent. Because Tevetoğlu loved and respected Professor Atsız very much. Tevetoğlu was also a close friend of mine. Allah

may He have mercy on him. Anyway, after experiencing all this during that trial, we left. I came back and explained the situation to my friends, and we prepared the **Atsız** Tribute. However, Mehmet Kaplan was not to be included. We prepared the **Atsız** Tribute with great effort. But the Professor passed away fifteen days before the tribute book was published.

– What was the issue between Mehmet Kaplan and Atsız Bey?

– Well, sir, Mehmet Kaplan was an 'Anatolianist' and a man who did not really consider those outside Anatolia to be Turks. They call such people 'Anatolianists'. Whereas Atsız Hoca was a man whose mind and worldview encompassed the entire Turkic world, from as far afield as Vienna right through to Ötüken, keeping them alive in his thoughts. I mention this because, for instance, Atsız Hoca has passed away, as have the others, and I do not know what has become of their books. He had a vast library. It was not just any ordinary person's library.

– Have you ever met Mrs Bedriye?

– We were just as familiar with Mrs Bedriye as we were with her sons. However, we didn't have much time to get very close to them, as they were always in Germany.

– What exactly was the issue between her and her sons?

– Her eldest son was inclined towards left-wing ideas, in keeping with the mindset of the time. Her younger son was even closer to nationalism. However, his wife ensured that they always remained with her in Europe. Nevertheless, her younger son did come to Istanbul for a short period whilst pursuing his higher education.

– What would you like to say about Nejdet Sançar?

– Mr Nejdet was a brave man. Nejdet Sançar was a leading figure in Ankara. Just as Atsız Bey was a leading figure in Istanbul, so too was Nejdet Sançar in Ankara, and no one had the right to refuse a request from Nejdet Sançar. He was also a very moderate man. He would laugh sometimes. But even his laughter was a beautiful thing.

– Was there any difference between Nejdet Sançar and Atsız Bey?

– There was no difference. It was just that when someone opposed the cause, Atsız Hoca would speak in the harshest terms. Nejdet Bey would say, *'Damn it,'* and saw little need to respond further. But once Atsız Hoca opened his mouth, he would lay into them.

– Atsız Bey's religious side is much debated—some say he was a Shamanist, others that he was a Muslim. What would you like to say about this?

– Most of that sort of talk is just empty chatter. Those who have read Atsız Bey's novels will know that even in the novel *__Bozkurtlar__*, there are 40 characters. Forty people. Those 40 people are regarded as sacred. In Turkish belief, this is referred to as 'joining the 40'. In fact, with Kür Şad, that makes 41 people. However, one of them is late for the final gathering. When he arrives late for the final gathering, the 40 set off, and he catches up and joins them. 'Maşallah' 41 times. What does 'maşallah' 41 times mean? That is precisely it. In other words, this is not an Islamic tradition. It is merely a concept within Turkish culture. That is the first point. Secondly, in all of Atsız Bey's works, he mentions, for example, a solar eclipse. The famous solar eclipse associated with our Prophet is featured in the novel *__Bozkurtlar__*. Let's set these aside for now. When you look at Mr Atsız's other books, you'll see that Islam is just as valuable as Turkishness. In

other words,

those who attack him in this way are being disrespectful. Nothing more.

– In fact, in the work that Professor Necmettin Sefercioğlu wrote about Nejdet San-çar, he mentions that Professor Nejdet also used to pray, and so on.

– Of course, of course. Professor Nejdet's wife was even more devout.

May Allah have mercy on him.

– Did you attend Mr Atsız's funeral?

– Yes, I did. In fact, his eldest son turned up with his hair *all over the place*. *'What's with that hair, my boy?'* I said. 'It's your father's funeral,' I added. No reply at all. Because they were younger than me. They know me very well too.

– Did Mr Atsız have a fondness for tea?

– Tea was served at his home. We'd drink tea, because coffee wasn't widely available at the time and could only be served to distinguished guests. Whenever we visited, he'd say, *'Here's some for me.'* There was something else.

– Mrs Kaniye?

– Yes. She's passed away now, but she was a very good person. She made lovely tea. She'd bring the tea. We'd have our tea.

– What are your thoughts on the issue between Türkeş and Atsız?

– There wasn't really any serious issue between them. It's just that Mr Türkeş had entered political life, and according to

political circumstances

. Mr Atsız, on the other hand, was a man wholly devoted to his cause, never deviating from it by so much as a millimetre. That is the difference between them…

–What would you say about Mr Atsız being offered a seat in parliament?

– Offers of a parliamentary seat, or even a ministerial post, for Mr Atsız… He would just laugh them off, saying, *'Come on, give me a* break,*'* and brush them aside. He would never accept such things. Absolutely not. Professor Nejdet was the same. In '54, our association was closed down, and Osman Turan came along. He was very young at the time. He said to me, *'Let's join Türk Ocağı.' 'All right…'* he said. We all joined Türk Ocağı en masse. Necmettin Sefercioğlu was there too.

– What was Atsız Bey's relationship with food like?

– He was a man of modest means. All his wealth lay in his own world and his library. But his library is gone too. I don't know what remains of Atsız Hoca today.

– Some say he wrote his novels whilst wearing a coat to keep out the cold.

– No. He didn't sit like that.

– In the cold, with the stove not lit, and so on.

– Granted, but Hoca didn't pay any heed to such things. He made do with the stove.

– Professor, there is a lost book that Atsız Bey was working on…

– By 'lost book', he meant the great book the Professor was working on.

– Did he mention this book to you?

– Of course, of course. It was a huge book. *"I've reached the end of it, that's it,"* he said.

– It went missing afterwards.

– His sons and his wife…

– Finally, what would you like to say about Mr Atsız?

– Honestly, there's so much to say, but no matter how much I say now, it won't be enough. Because I'm currently one of the people who knows Mr Atsız best. He'd also come into exile and was sitting opposite him in the library. The religious teacher… He got on very well with him.

– Thank you, Professor.

– You're welcome.

PROF. DR. AHMET BİCAN ERCİLASUN

(24 May 2016, Ankara)

– First of all, could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– My name is Ahmet Bican Ercilasun. I was born on 8 February 1943 in Izmir. I completed my primary, secondary and sixth-form education in Izmir. Between 1963 and 1967, I studied at the Faculty of Arts, Department of Turkish Language and Literature, at Istanbul University. In 1967, I became a research assistant at Atatürk University; I obtained my PhD in 1971 and moved to Hacettepe. I worked at Hacettepe from 1971 to 1986, and from 1986 until my retirement in 2010, I worked at Gazi University. My research focuses on the Turkish language, Turkish dialects and Turkish culture.

– Professor, when and how did you first meet Mr Atsız?

– I met Mr Atsız in 1963, the year I was a student in Istanbul. The Faculty of Arts at Istanbul University was very close to the Süleymaniye Library, where he worked. I had actually read his books whilst still at secondary school, and once I arrived in Istanbul, I had made up my mind to meet him. As soon as I arrived, I went to the Süleymaniye Library and met him. After that, during the four years I spent in Istanbul, I visited him frequently at the Süleymaniye Library at lunchtime, and sometimes at his home in Maltepe at weekends.

– Professor, you are a man of letters…

– More of a linguist…

– Yes, as a literary scholar and a linguist – Atsız Bey is also a literary scholar – what would you like to say about his literary persona?

– Mr Atsız was a linguist, a literary scholar and a historian. In other words, as a scholar, he produced works in all three of these fields. He was a highly accomplished linguist. He had a thorough knowledge of the Old Turkic Inscriptions, but his works primarily pertain to what we in linguistics refer to as 'Old Anatolian Turkish'—the early period of Western Turkish spanning from the 13th to the 16th centuries. He was the foremost authority in this field in his own time; that is to say, he was the person most knowledgeable about 13th, 14th, 15th, XVIth-century Anatolian Turkish. He has numerous works in this field, foremost among them **the History of Âşıkpaşaoğlu** [31]and **the History of Oruç Bey** [32]. He was the person who best understood the works of that era. As a literary figure… First and foremost, of course, a novelist… His novels ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*** and ***The Grey Wolves Rise Again*** are unrivalled in Turkish historical fiction. So, if you were to ask which is the finest work in Turkish historical fiction, it would undoubtedly be these two works—these two novels, which are sequels to one another. These are works that transport the reader back to the era of the Göktürks. As a historian, Atsız knew the Göktürk period very well, but he also lived and breathed the spirit of that era. The Professor knew that geography as if it were the palm of his hand, even though he had never actually been there. As you know, the novel ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*** begins in 621 with a very violent downpour on the steppe. It begins with a sudden downpour. When we went there in 1990 for a television series called *The Altai Mountains*, the same thing happened to us

31 Haz, Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, *The History of Aşıpaşaoğlu*, Ötüken Publications, 8th edition 2017,

32 Haz, Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, The History of Oruç Beğ: Three Ottoman

Histories, Ötüken Publications, 4th edition 2016,

He arrived in the same lands. The sky had been clear when, all of a sudden, a torrential downpour… Our bus had become stuck in the mud. Atsız seemed as though he had seen those places, as though he had lived there. Of course, he also knew the spirit of that era and the psychology of the people of that time very well. Furthermore, his novel ***Deli Kurt***, which also recounts the Ottoman period, its early years, and the era we call the 'Interregnum', is an exceptionally fine historical novel. He knew the history of that era very well too. Indeed, the historical periods he wrote about were largely from that era. He has one novel that stands apart from these: ***Ruh Adam***. There is now a movement in Turkey that has recently come to the fore and, in a sense, become fashionable: postmodernism. Even in times when the concept and term 'postmodernism' had not yet been heard of in Turkey, Atsız wrote a postmodern novel with ***Ruh Adam***. Its main characteristic as a postmodern novel is the interweaving of time periods. You see a hero living in the era of Mete, a hero living in the era of the Uyghurs, and a hero of the present day; all time periods are interwoven. As a literary work, apart from its status as a historical novel, it is an extremely valuable piece of literature. His poems are also outstanding works. In other words, Atsız did not devote much effort to poetry. Had he devoted more effort to poetry, he might have become a first-rate poet. But he did not devote much effort to it. Nevertheless, through the poems he wrote, he has proven himself to be an outstanding poet.

– Professor, is there any interesting incident involving Mr Atsız that has stayed with you?

– There are, of course, many such incidents between Mr Atsız and me. Naturally, we were young at the time—university students and rather shy. We would often go to see Atsız, we'd talk, but we behaved rather timidly. He was also very close to my wife. Atsız was also very close to my father-in-law. Consequently, he was a witness at our wedding. Everyone knows that now. Our engagement party was also held at his house. In fact, he was the one who put the rings on our fingers. These are memories in their own right. But whilst we were in Erzurum – from 1967 to 1971

We stayed in Erzurum – we were corresponding with Atsız. To be more precise, he was writing letters, but we were neglecting to reply a little; because of this neglect, one day he remarked to my father-in-law: *'Your children can read, but I suppose they can't write*.' I'd told him about the lecturers at Atatürk University, asking who was there, and I'd mentioned that Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu was also a history lecturer. He's known Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu since his youth, after all. He's also a very important historian specialising in Kars. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu is a researcher who attaches great importance to Kars; in other words, whatever there is to Kars, it is all about Kars for Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu. In his reply, Atsız said: *'According to Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, Kars is the centre of the world, and Istanbul is Kars's quay*.' Everyone knows that Atsız was actually a witty man. He made this very joke in one of his letters, too.

– Professor, as someone who visited Mr Atsız regularly, could you tell us about his daily life and home life?

– His home life was extremely ordinary. For a start, a very significant part of his days was spent travelling. Let's call this a misfortune for Atsız. There was a very long distance between his home and his workplace. In other words, he would board the train from Maltepe to Haydarpaşa; it took about an hour to reach Haydarpaşa on that train. From there, he'd board a ferry to Karaköy, and then walk all the way to Süleymaniye. That took roughly two to two and a half hours… And then there was the return journey; he spent four to five hours a day travelling, and from around 1951, when he retired, until 1969, a large part of his life was spent on the road. I often saw him at the Süleymaniye Library. As you know, there is a garden in the middle of our old buildings; the sections opening onto that garden have been enclosed with glass to form a corridor. He would work in a corner of one of those corridors—that is, during working hours he would be there, poring over all our old manuscripts. That is why his

The Birgili manuscripts and their bibliography, as well as the Ebussuud Efendi manuscripts and their bibliographies at the Süleymaniye Libraries, are the result of this very work. I can say that all the manuscripts of that period passed through his hands. There are 60,000 manuscripts in the libraries of Istanbul. This also demonstrates his mastery of that era.

– Atsız Bey was also said to have worked in other libraries.

– In other words, he would visit different libraries from time to time, but for the most part, he spent his life at the Süleymaniye. Indeed, all the manuscripts were later gathered at the Süleymaniye. Consequently, that was his place of work. Naturally, he would return home late in the evening. He only found the opportunity to work at home at weekends. With such an intense work schedule, he had very little time left for his scholarly and literary pursuits. Consider, too, that at weekends his home was filled with visitors. We would also visit from time to time, and people from all over Anatolia wanted to see Atsız. Since he was at the library during the week, he was at home at the weekend. So we can say that he didn't have much time left for himself. He was alone at home. His wife had been in Germany for the last ten or fifteen years. When we visited, Yağmur Atsız was doing his military service. That's why Yağmur was there, but generally the children weren't there either, and he was alone. Of course, he also met up with his friends very frequently. He had friends in Istanbul whom he saw very often. He was in constant contact with them as well. In fact, these friends who met with Atsız would often go to see him at the time he finished at the Süleymaniye Library and walk with him all the way to Karaköy. From there, they would see him off as he boarded the ferry.

– Who were some of the people he used to meet, Professor?

– For example, there was Muzaffer Eriş from the Class of '44. There was my father-in-law, İzzet Yolalan, and also someone from a slightly later year than the Class of '44

generation, Refet Körüklü. Later, they bought a flat in the same block as Refet Körüklü and became neighbours. In recent times, he was talking more frequently with these three. In earlier days, he was a student of Altan Deliorman, and naturally he met very often with his fellow students, Erk Yurtsever; they were students from the early 1950s at Haydarpaşa High School. He also used to meet very frequently with İsmail Hakkı Gökhun—who had become famous amongst us as 'Şaman'—whilst Gökhun was in Istanbul, but after Gökhun moved to Ankara, they corresponded more frequently by letter. Gökhun was not as negligent as we were; he wrote to Atsız very often. In the letters published by Yücel Hacaloğlu, there are quite a few addressed to Gökhun. To find out who Atsız met with in earlier periods, one must consult Yağmur Atsız's book ***The Last 65 Years of My Life**[*] [(33)]. Yes, his daily life was like that too...

– Professor, what were his mannerisms and behaviour like?

– Extremely polite, kind, and cheerful… Whenever someone visited his home—whenever we visited his home—he would always make tea and offer us biscuits. He had an assistant, Mrs Kaniye; not much else needed to be done, as there was never a shortage of guests at his home. He would serve biscuits and the like. But his own demeanour was extremely courteous, and he was a delightful conversationalist… He would always crack a few jokes too.

– From what you observed, what were Mr Atsız's distinctive traits?

– What were his distinctive traits? Let me put it this way: what are his distinctive traits? Actually, the traits that should naturally be present in our society are considered distinctive. I mean, honour is a natural part of being human, isn't it? But consider our society today. He was a

33 Yağmur Atsız, The First 65 Years of My Life, Turkish Literature Foundation Publications, 2006.

a monument to honour, a paragon of honour. He was extremely intelligent, very intelligent indeed. His wit naturally stemmed from his intelligence. Intelligent people tend to be witty. Apart from that, he was, of course, just a human being.

– Do you have any information about the languages that Professor Atsız knew?

– The languages he knew… He knew Persian very well; indeed, he had translated a work from Persian—Şükrüllah's book *Behcetü't-Tevârih* is a translation from Persian. He also knew Arabic, though perhaps not well enough to translate; he knew enough Arabic to understand Arabic works. He also knew French. He knew enough French to keep up with scholarly works in that language.

– Professor, did you have the opportunity to discuss the '44 events'?

– No, not specifically about the '44 events'. If the conversation turned to that, we would have discussed the '44 events'. I didn't ask specifically. If we'd had the insight we have today, we'd have asked about many things. At the time, unfortunately, we didn't ask about certain things specifically. However, his recollections regarding the '44 events' were published in **Orkun** Magazine, which was published in the early 1950s. They are quite detailed; those recollections are well worth reading.

– Did you ever have the opportunity to meet Mrs Bedriye?

– No, I saw Mrs Bedriye once or twice. One of those times was at a funeral.

– Did you know Nejdet Sançar?

– I knew Nejdet Sançar. I used to visit his home in Ankara

quite often. Nejdet Sançar was a very cheerful man.

So, his laughter… Perhaps that's the Sançar from *The Death of **the Grey Wolves***. Sançar, who laughs heartily, is a hero modelled on Nejdet Sançar. Nejdet Sançar and his wife, Reşide Hanım, are both extremely gracious people. They are the sort of people who can strike up a conversation like this; even if we don't speak, Professor Nejdet will speak, and from what I've heard from his students, anyone who is a student of Nejdet Sançar cannot help but become a bearer of his ideas. In other words, Nejdet Sançar has a direct influence on people. Whereas Atsız is not like that; Atsız does not engage in propaganda during his lessons; he might recount history or the like, but Atsız does not engage in propaganda. That is why he is a serious teacher. He does not engage in propaganda; Nihal Atsız merely made it a requirement to know the **National** Anthem by heart. This is recounted by Attilâ İlhan, who was his student for a short time.

– What sort of differences were there between Mr Atsız and Sançar?

– There were only differences in temperament. There was no difference in their ideas. It was a matter of temperament. Let me put it this way: Nejdet Sançar had a more outgoing nature, more at ease with people. Atsız was a man who preferred solitude a little more… He enjoyed solitude, but no one ever left him alone.

– Professor, what are your thoughts on Atsız Bey's religious side, which is the subject of much debate these days?

– Well, he has expressed his own views on his religious side in articles published at various times. One needs to look at those to draw conclusions… That is to say, from what he wrote in the 1950s in ***Orkun*** **magazine**, he was a man who regarded religion as one of our nation's sacred values.

– Professor, what would you like to say about the incident between him and Türkeş? Was there a problem, to be precise?

– Of course there was; a problem arose between them. Initially, he very much wanted, indeed longed for, Mr Türkeş to

found a party. In fact, together

the 44 Turkists. After Alparslan Türkeş returned from India, they also spoke together and exchanged views on the party's programme. We know that Atsız had previously published the 'Nine Lights' in the form of nine principles. But later, when Mr Türkeş entered politics and began touring Anatolia, he realised that religious sentiment and religious thought were very influential amongst the people of Anatolia, and he placed a little too much emphasis on religion. Atsız did not take kindly to this. The rift between them arose from this.

– We know that Mr Atsız was offered a seat in parliament.

– He did, from the Justice Party. When the Justice Party was first established – this would have been in the early 1960s – he received an offer of a parliamentary seat from the Justice Party, but he did not accept it.

– Professor, there is a story told about him. It is said that, due to his poor financial circumstances, he wrote his novels whilst wearing a coat.

– Yes, one could say his financial situation was poor. I mean, he wasn't in a state of utter destitution, but it was poor. He had a decent house, but it wasn't heated.

– Could one describe him as middle-class?

– Yes, middle class—or even below that. He was living on a civil servant's salary, after all. Civil servant salaries weren't very good back then either. The house wasn't often heated, and he'd sit at home wearing his coat. We'd often see him like that when we visited.

– Professor, how was the relationship with food for someone who loved tea so much?

– Well, I don't recall him ever talking much about food. But

when it came to tea, he'd say, *'Our forefathers' tea,'* whenever tea was served.

So he had this sort of interest in tea. He never stopped making the *'Our ancestors are tea'* joke. Sir, he didn't have any particular interest in food, as far as I could tell.

– It is known that, before his passing, he was preparing a comprehensive book on Turkish history.

– Yes.

– With his passing, that book was lost…

– Unfortunately, we do not know what that book was.

– Did you attend his funeral, Professor?

– I did. It was a large funeral. It took place at the Osman Ağa Mosque in Kadıköy. From there, he was carried on people's shoulders to the nearby Karacaahmet Cemetery. It was a large funeral. His sons were there, as was Mrs Bedriye. In fact, I recall that at one point Yağmur was a little disturbed by the boisterous behaviour of some young Turkish nationalists. When he tried to intervene, Mehmet Kaplan, Atsız's brother-in-law, said to him seriously, 'Yağmur…' and added, *'He belongs to the nation. Let the nation express whatever is on its mind as it sees fit.'* I recall him saying things like that; I must have been standing right there with them at the time. Mehmet Kaplan was also his brother-in-law.

– Professor, in various works it is recounted that Refet Körüklü recited the Qur'an at his bedside before he passed away. Is this account accurate?

– Yes, Refet Körüklü was a devout man. As I said, in his final years he was one of the people Atsız saw most frequently.

He came of age just after '44. We used to call him Uncle Refet. He was very close to us. And Refet Körüklü was also a devout man; he prayed the five daily prayers. I don't think Atsız performed his religious duties. But Uncle Refet was devout. The concept of religion simply didn't exist in Atsız's mind. Atsız was a Turkish nationalist, and religion wasn't an issue in his mind. Yes, Uncle Refet read the Qur'an in his presence. I remember him telling me that too.

– Was that before his death?

– Yes, yes, before his death, of course.

– Professor, as you know, there's been a real surge of interest in Atsız recently.

– Let's not call it a craze—there's been a great deal of interest in Atsız.

– Yes, various books are being written about him. In fact, you even discussed this topic on a TV programme. Would you like to say anything else?

– Yes, I'm very pleased with this interest in Atsız. Sir, the value of a worthy person is recognised in the end. I mean, his books weren't printed in such large numbers back then, but now they're selling out, sir**.** I believe the book *__Bozkurtlar__* has reached its 114th printing. I never would have guessed that *__Ruh Adam__* would pass the 60th printing. All his articles have been collected and published as a book. Furthermore, all his books and articles are available online. You can access them on the internet. Many people have also written books about him. It seems you'll be writing one too. That's how it looks. That's a very good thing.

– Professor, that's all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

– Finally, what I'd like to mention is perhaps the harmony between Atsız's character and his ideas. In other words, for many people, their ideas, character and way of life do not align. Whatever Atsız's ideas were, that was his character. In fact, the conclusion I've drawn from my own life experience recently is this: a person's character is very important and it influences their ideas. In fact, it even guides his ideas. But if there is no connection between a person's ideas and their character, that person does not feel psychologically at ease. Atsız was not like that. His character was exactly the same as his ideas. In other words, his ideas stemmed from his character. We Turkists know him as a man of his word because of his way of life. If that were not the case, it would not be good for Turkism or for nationalism.

– Thank you, Professor.

– You're welcome.

YÜCEL HACALOŠLU

(24 May 2016, Ankara)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I was born in 1936 in the village of Çağlayan, in the Fındıklı district of Rize. I attended primary school in Kars, secondary school in Trabzon, and studied at the Faculty of Communication in Istanbul. I began my career in journalism in 1956 and retired in 2001 whilst serving as an adviser to the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK). I worked for various newspapers.

– When and how did you meet Mr Atsız?

– This is how we met Mr Atsız: I was a pupil in the first year of secondary school in Kars; our teacher was Selahattin Ertürk. He later became a professor of philosophy at Hacettepe University. He had mentioned the Bozkurtlar in 1948. We had another teacher called Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, who later became a professor of history at Atatürk University. He had also mentioned them. I came to Trabzon in 1951 and read Nihal Atsız's novel *__The Death of the Grey Wolves__*. I do not know of anyone who has read it and not been deeply moved by it. That is why I wrote to him and asked for his photograph. She sent me a photograph. I had that photograph enlarged later. That photograph is still hanging on the wall of the Turkish Cultural Association's General Headquarters in Ankara. Later, when I went to Istanbul in '55, I visited her. We met. For about 15 years, we would spend one or

two days a week together – at the Süleymaniye Library, at home…

– You have published Mr Atsız's letters. Have you undertaken any other work relating to Mr Atsız?

– No, I haven't.

– How did the idea of compiling the letters come about?

– I've been working on it for 45 years, you see. And he wrote letters to a great many people. Some people didn't hand over their letters. I won't name names, but I know they wrote to him; they simply didn't want to give them up. There are still another 150–200 letters in the hands of certain people.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's scholarly side, his work as a historian and his literary contributions?

– In my view, Mr Atsız's most distinctive quality was his idealism – he was a man with an uncompromising commitment to his ideals. But Mr Atsız was, first and foremost, a man of letters… He was a man who used the Turkish language skilfully, with a fluent and elegant style. At the same time, Mr Atsız was a fine historian… You'll be familiar with ***The Death of the Grey Wolves***; it's a novel recounting the history of the Turkic states in Central Asia. I don't know if you've read it.

– Yes, I have.

– So Mr Atsız has written scholarly works. For example, ***The Nine Tribes of the Turks*** **and** ***The History of the Ottoman Sultans***—these are entirely scholarly works, dedicated to the Ottoman sultans. They are published works.

– Is there any interesting incident you experienced with Mr Atsız?

– There are many, but for example, there was a doctor called İzzettin Şadan. He was also a friend of Atsız Bey's. Apparently, he was a friend of Rıza Nur's as well… I knew him too. Atsız Bey

used to joke around with him a lot. In fact, one

, he wrote a poem in verse for him one day, and he took a bit of offence at it, or something like that; the part I remember wasn't published anywhere.

'O son of a royal shaman, you enemy of the Ottomans, you're a Freemason; your name is "Turkish nationalist", O coward, O thief, you drank wine and threw up…'

There were jocular verses like that. İzzettin Şadan took great offence at this. I was a witness to this incident.

– What sort of person was Atsız Bey in everyday life?

– He was a man with no social life, no nightlife, living a modest existence, getting by on the salary provided by the state. Now, as you know, the History Congress was held in 1932. At the History Congress, Zeki Velidi Togan said, *'They* say *there used to be lakes and rivers in Central Asia, but the region has dried up. All the Turks in the world spread out from there. These claims are not true.'* He said, *'They do not conform to historical facts.*' At that time, the universities were under the Ministry of National Education. The Minister of National Education was Reşit Galip. Atatürk summoned Reşit Galip and asked, *'Who is this?'* They said, 'He's a Tatar.' 'Get rid of him,' he said, and had him removed. Following this, Nihal Atsız, together with seven friends, sent a telegram. 'Professor, we are following your path; what you say is correct,' they wrote. He himself was an assistant at the Institute of Turkish Studies, working under Fuat Köprülü. They removed him from there too and transferred him to Malatya Secondary School. Atatürk even remarked, *'Who is this man*?'—they replied that he was a secondary school teacher and an assistant. *'You cannot cope with a secondary school teacher,' he* said. However, certain people around him—led by Reşit Galip, and including Köprülü—prevented him from meeting Atatürk. Perhaps if they had allowed the meeting to take place, Atsız's life might have taken a different course; he might have become a man who produced far more scholarly works.

– What were Atsız Bey's mannerisms and temperament like?

– It is not right to judge him solely by his writings. In conversation, he was an affectionate, witty and highly spirited man. He introduced many of our young friends—both lads and girls—who visited his home or the library to one another and arranged their marriages. He was the catalyst for their marriages.

– Who were some of the young people he brought together?

– Mustafa Kafalı and Sevgi Kafalı were among them. He was the catalyst for their marriages. Bilge Hanım, the wife of Ahmet Bican Ercilasun, was also the daughter of İzzet Yolalan, a close friend of Mr Atsız. In short, he was the catalyst for the marriages of so many people.

– As far as you could tell, did Atsız Bey have any distinctive traits?

– Well, he was a wonderful speaker; he spoke beautifully. As he knew history so well, he had a profound influence on the young people he spoke to. It seemed as though there was hardly anyone who wasn't influenced by him.

– Do you know which languages Mr Atsız spoke?

– Well, as he'd attended a French school, he spoke French. He also spoke Persian.

– What would you like to say about the events of '44? Have you spoken to any of the others who were put on trial alongside Mr Atsız?

– Of course, of course. I know the vast majority of them. Under the circumstances of that era, the authorities of the time, unfortunately, did the wrong things. They branded Turkish nationalists as racists. They branded them as Turanists. I am a Turanist, but not in the sense of being a racist. Atsız Bey was not

a racist either. He wasn't the sort to go looking for blood in the veins

. He used to say, '*Anyone who feels Turkish is Turkish*.' In other words, amongst our friends who served the Turkish cause, there were Georgians and others of various origins, but the idea of being non-Turkish never crossed their minds. There was no such thing. All that talk of measuring skulls or whatever else they did—it's all a load of rubbish, lies, fabrications. He was a man who came under a great deal of attack. As you know, in 1944, the march organised by the nationalist youth of the time in connection with the case against Sabahattin Ali alarmed the government, and 23 people, led by Atsız Bey and including Zeki Velidi Togan, Hasan Ferit Cansever, Orhan Şaik Gökyay, Nejdet Sançar, Hikmet Tanyu, Fethi Tevetoğlu and 23 others were each sentenced to about a year in prison. The court convicted them. Atsız Bey was sentenced to ten years. Z. Velidi was sentenced to eleven years. Later, the Military Court of Cassation overturned the case entirely and acquitted them all in 1947.

– What topics did you discuss in your conversations with Mr Atsız?

– We would talk about political matters during our conversations, and we'd also discuss football; he was very keen on football and international matches.

– Did he support any particular team?

– He supported the national team, but he had a classmate who was the chairman of Fenerbahçe Sports Club – a doctor whose name escapes me at the moment. He'd introduced me to him. Because of that, he was a Fenerbahçe supporter. He supported Fenerbahçe. His brother, Nejdet Sançar, played football for Fenerbahçe.

– Did he give you a nickname?

– Yes. Because I knew everyone, he used to call me 'the Registrar'.

– Did you meet Mrs Bedriye and her children?

– Mrs Bedriye, there's Professor Mehmet Kaplan; his wife, Mrs Behice, is the sister of Nihal Atsız's wife. The two were sisters-in-law. They are originally from Trabzon. As you know, Nihal Atsız is from the village of Midi in the Torul district of Gümüşhane. Now, his relatives settled in a village in Yozgat some 100–150 years ago. I looked into it there too, but we couldn't find anyone. Now, Mr Atsız's wife has two children. Yağmur, born in 1939, is a friend of mine. The second child, Buğra, was born in 1946; he settled in Canada. He married a Polish Jewish girl. I believe he has two children. They aren't his father's children. His father objected, but he wouldn't listen. They found him a job as an assistant or something of the sort in Turkey. He said it wouldn't work, and so on. His mother also went to Germany in 1961 or '62. There, she became *a lecturer*—what we call an 'okutman' here. She worked there until she died. Her eldest son, Yağmur, studied political science there. Three months before Nihal Atsız died, on 11 December 1975, she showed me a piece of paper. *"Read this,"* she said. I read a court notice. A court notice stating that he had divorced his wife… I asked, *"Professor, why are you showing me this?" "You need to know,"* he told me. So that was the sort of thing that happened between us. They weren't on good terms. The house in Maltepe, Istanbul, belonged to his wife. After his wife died, Yağmur and Buğra handed it over to the building contractor. They'd given him a new flat and so on…

– Have you met Nejdet Sançar?

– Of course I met Mr Nejdet. Mr Nejdet was also very hard-working and a very witty man. Like his brother, he was a graduate of the Faculty of Literature. Whichever city he went to, he would influence his students there. Let me give you an example. Bekir Berk later became a Nurcu. Under Mr Nejdet's influence, he became a nationalist. Then he became a Nurcu. He left all that behind. But what I'm trying to say here is this: Mr Nejdet's wife, Mrs Reşide, passed away. They brought her funeral here (to Ankara).

To be buried beside her son… She had a son who died at the age of 16. He died of typhoid. Afşın. To be buried beside him. Naturally, as I knew Reşide Hanım, the funeral was to be held at Kocatepe Mosque, so I was also involved in the arrangements. A man came up to me and said, *'Are you a close relative?' 'You could say that,' I* replied. *'I'd like to cover the costs of this funeral,' he* said. *'Who are you?' I* asked. He was an architect who'd been a student of Mr Nejdet and Mrs Reşide in Edirne, and had become a wealthy man in Istanbul. He'd come to the funeral solely to cover the costs.

– Do you remember his name?

– I don't remember his name, but I'd recognise him if I saw him. I said, *"He has relatives here; let me introduce you to them."* I introduced him. There were the children of Mrs Reşide's sister—her nephews and nieces—whom I'd also met for the first time there. I introduced him to them. They thanked him too. So, this is what I'm getting at. Wherever he went—in Zonguldak, Edirne, Balıkesir, Sivas—whenever he was teaching, he always had pupils. They were all nationalists.

– I believe Necdet Özgelen is also one of Nejdet Bey's former pupils. He's among those on trial.

– Yes, Doctor. But he didn't spend much time in prison.

– Atsız Bey's religious side is much debated. What are your thoughts on this matter?

– Our people believe all sorts of things on these matters—there's a saying, isn't there: 'the people believe the biggest lies'—well, Atsız Bey was certainly no Shaman. Those are just stories, lies. A couple of young people come along and say, *'Professor, could you tell us about Shamanism?'* Shamanism is an ancient religion and culture of the Turks… When they say, 'Let's become shamans,' I ask, *'Is that even possible? What shaman? Islam*

exists.*"* I never saw Atsız pray. But in my view, he was a man of faith. He was a Muslim. After all, having seen those bigots—for instance, he wrote an article called **'The Ramblings Called Nurculuk**'—seeing them makes one want to turn away from Islam.

– On the day he died, Refet Körüklü recited the Qur'an.

– He did, that's right. They tied his jaw shut when he died.

– Professor, would you like to say anything about the relationship between Türkeş and Atsız?

– His relationship with Türkeş: there was a magazine being published in Konya; I think it was called ***Oku***. It contained things against Turkishness. In a reply he gave to it, he said things like, 'These people aren't Muslims,' and so on; 'We are Turks, we are racists,' though by 'racism' he didn't mean it in the sense of blood ties, as I've said. Türkeş then said—I was Türkeş's adviser at the Prime Minister's Office at the time—*'I am the leader of a political party. I will be seeking the people's vote.'* Such remarks—labelling people in Anatolia as 'godless', 'infidels' or 'heretics'—caused a rift between them. There's also the story of a young man being murdered here in Cebeci. Ali Balseven was stabbed to death by someone. There were all sorts of rumours—'He was a racist', 'He was an Islamist'—and so on… That's why the party banned the **Ötüken** magazine. In fact, when he died, I said to Türkeş: *'Sir, are you going to the funeral?* I *know about the issues between you, but he's dead.*' He said, *'You will represent me.'* I said, *'I'm going to the funeral anyway.*' So there were things like that. They were at odds. In other words, this stems from that. Atsız did not like politics. *'Politics is the art of compromise,'* he used to say. *'Türkeş makes concessions on certain issues. He makes concessions to the religious conservatives. He makes concessions to the Nurcu movement,'* he would say.

– It's said that you were offered a seat in parliament, Professor.

– That's correct; the Democratic Party made an offer, but he declined it.

– He must have received an offer from the Justice Party as well.

– He received offers from both the Justice Party and the Democratic Party – from both of them. He told me so himself.

– It is said that he wrote his novels whilst wearing a coat.

– His income was modest… He was, after all, a teacher at Haydarpaşa High School, and later he was appointed as a specialist clerk at the library. He spent four hours a day travelling – two hours there, two hours back. I often saw him sitting at home in his overcoat. In other words, had he had more comfortable living conditions, one might have expected him to produce some truly fine scholarly works and historical novels.

– Apparently, he had written a work on Turkish history before his death, but that work has gone missing. Do you have any information on this matter?

– What I know about this is as follows: he wrote that book. But the book is nowhere to be found. Yağmur's son said the book was missing. But in my opinion, the late Altan Deliorman told me one day that he and his youngest son, Buğra, had gone to a publishing house. Buğra negotiated the deal for this book. Altan Deliorman's view was also that it was with Buğra. At the moment, there is nothing to be found. I mentioned this in the foreword to those letters. One day, the late Yılmaz Öztuna told me: *"Yağmur rang me. There is a chest at my father's house. There are some things written in the old script. If I sent them to you, would you have a look?"* To which I replied, *"I'm getting on in years; I can't bother with this sort of thing*." Upon hearing this, I rang Yağmur from

Germany. Yağmur said to me, *"My friend, why are you bothering with this sort of thing?" "I've started building a block of flats but haven't finished it yet*

that's why,' I said, joking. I was mocking him. I mean, I don't know what's in that box.

– Recently, a lot of books have been published about Mr Atsız.
What are your thoughts on this?

– A lot of books have been published. I've read them all. Now another one has come out. It's called ***Atsız*** **in the press**. I haven't read that one yet. I couldn't find it in Ankara. A friend is going to send it to me. Among these, one of the best is the book written by Hayri Yıldırım. He's written it objectively. There's also one written by an Uzbek boy. Nergishan Tekin's book is also fairly objective. The others are a bit more biased.

– Finally, is there anything else you'd like to say about Mr Atsız?

– Let's put it this way: there was a Tatar professor called Sadri Maksudi Arsal. He was a nationalist. He served as a Member of Parliament during Atatürk's time. His daughter, Adile Ayla, said the following when speaking about Nihal Atsız: *'You are a monument to national consciousness who will remain a source of inspiration even centuries from now.'* It has been 40 years since Atsız passed away. Nationalist organisations across Turkey are gathering to commemorate him. So this is a significant matter. He has had a profound influence. Many young people have benefited from the books he wrote. Everyone he spoke to was deeply influenced by him. Whomever I spoke to, I never encountered anyone speaking ill of him. Although there are those who do not admire his character or his fighting spirit, that is possible; but as I said, Atsız is a man whose greatness becomes more apparent as time goes by.

The Kurdish nationalist movements had flared up. The Professor said: *'What do they want from Turkey? We took these lands with blood, and we'll give them up with blood. If they want to establish a state, let them go to Madagascar.*' Following this, he was

taken to court. Dividing the nation

and so on—the case dragged on for years, and whilst the presiding judge recommended acquittal, two members of the bench sought a conviction. He was convicted. I visited him twice at Toptaş Prison. He served roughly two and a half months in prison. Afterwards, he was transferred to Sağmalcılar Prison, where he served his sentence and was released. He already had high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes. Travelling to Süleymaniye every day for two hours there and two hours back until he was 69 – that's no easy feat. But the Turkish people never forget those who serve them. He wrote some wonderful poems, as you know; I know most of them off by heart. In other words, he was a teacher who could influence young people even through his poetry. In 1952, there was a secondary school here called Atatürk High School, where he gave a lecture. In that lecture, he said: *'We established two states in history. One in Central Asia, one in the Near East… The one in Central Asia ceased to exist. The state established in the Near East, in Anatolia, was founded in 1040 with the Battle of Dandanakan. 'The Karakhanids, the Seljuks and the Ottomans are one state. The form of government has changed,'* he said. *'Can you imagine the splendour of the parade you young people will hold, dressed in Göktürk attire, before the mausoleums of the great Turkish sultans?'* he asked. Then, on the pretext that he was seeking to restore the sultanate, they expelled him from Haydarpaşa High School. He was appointed as a clerk at the Süleymaniye Library. Now look at what the Kurdish MPs are saying.

– Atsız Bey's star did not align with the Democratic Party either.

– It wasn't good, of course. He never liked Celal Bayar anyway.

– What did he say about İnönü?

– He didn't like İnönü either. As you know, İnönü's book was published in 1941. In *The Night of the Sycophants*, as you know, the names and surnames are written with the surnames first. There are, for example, many things in there that mock

İsmet İnönü. They showed it to İsmet İnönü and told him, 'This isn't against you.' *'Then I felt at ease,' he* said.

– What did Mr Atsız think of Atatürk?

– *'One day, I saw him getting off the train at Haydarpaşa. His eyes were darting about,' he* says. *'A genius,' he* says. 'He *has his faults,' he* says. In his book ***The March to Çanakkale***, he goes on and on about his service during the War of Independence. In one of his poems, he also says:

'Had it not been for a glorious past behind him,
Would such a great Gazi have emerged from this nation?" [34]

He was not a man opposed to Atatürk. There were aspects he criticised. The whole story revolves around certain sycophants around Atatürk and non-Turks inciting people against him—from Reşit Galip to who knows who. Otherwise, he was not against Atatürk.

– My teacher Kadir Mısıroğlu said in a conversation: "We went to see Atsız together with Yücel Hacaloğlu. There, Atsız said, 'The Flood of Noah never happened. It's a lie.'" Is this incident true? Did something like this actually happen?

– Yes, we did go, but I didn't hear them discussing the Flood of Noah; I was standing a bit further back. I spent many years with Atsız, and I never heard him say anything like that. Besides, Mısıroğlu claims that the house in Maltepe was inherited from Rıza Nur or something. That house was inherited from his wife. They say he went blind. There's no truth in that. He's exaggerating.

– Thank you for interviewing me.

– It's nothing.

34 Atsız, Yolların Sonu, Ötüken Neşriyat, 21st edition, 2017, Istanbul, Toprak-Mazi, p. 22

FEHİMAN TOKLUOŠLU [35]

(24 May 2016, Ankara)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I was born in 1922. I'm from Kayseri. In the 1940s, I was a student at Istanbul Technical University. At that time, it was called the Higher School of Engineering. I knew Nihal Atsız from his writings. Whilst I was a student, I used to read Nihal Atsız's articles published in magazines such as **Orkun** and **Ergenekon**. I had never met him in person. However, by chance, when he was arrested in connection with the Racism-Turanism Trial, we found ourselves on the same side in that case.

– How did you become involved in this trial?

– At the time, there was Reha Oğuz Türkkan, who was also publishing a magazine. He had previously been arrested in 1944 during Atsız's trial in Ankara—you know, during the demonstrations—*and* Reha Oğuz Türkkan was arrested there *too*. When he stated in his testimony, *'Fehiman is one of us,'* they arrested me as well.

– How long were you in prison?

– I was there for nine months; Nihal Atsız was arrested one and a half months before me. I was arrested along with two friends from school.

35 Fehiman Tokluoğlu's surname, which appears as 'Altan' in some sources,

was changed to ‘Tokluoğlu’ by Fehiman Bey himself.

– Who were those friends of yours?

– One was Cihat Fer, the other Muzaffer Eriş. You will have read about the defendants in that case in the books. We were also arrested on the basis of their statements. I was later acquitted. Nihal Atsız received a sentence in that case. However, the Military Court of Appeal referred the case to the martial law court. They were tried by the Military Court of Appeal. At that time, martial law was in force in Istanbul.

– Did you spend any time in the 'coffin cells' or in cemeteries?

– I didn't stay in a detention cell. But they showed me the detention cell before taking my statement.

– What grounds did they give for your arrest?

– For being a relative of Reha Oğuz Türkkan…

– How did you meet Reha Oğuz Türkkan?

– He used to publish a magazine called **Bozkurt**. My school friends, including Cihad Fer, were his friends from secondary school. As we used to go to the Bozkurt offices, that's how we came to know Reha Oğuz Türkkan. We weren't friends, though.

– There was some tension between Reha Oğuz Türkkan and Nihal Atsız.

– Yes, there was.

– Do you know what it's about?

– Let me put it this way: they were both difficult people to get along with. In other words, they wouldn't easily settle for

being second best. Mine

is that my assessment. Then Oğuz Türkkan tried to edit some of Atsız's articles, thinking that if the magazine were to close, it would be dangerous. Atsız didn't like that either. I suppose he didn't like his articles being edited.

– Before the 1944 Events, a meeting was held at Zeki Velidi Togan's house; did you attend that meeting?

– No, I didn't attend. It was because I didn't attend that I was acquitted. They'd taken a photograph there. Everyone in that photograph was arrested. They arrested me on the basis of the statements made by Cihat Fer and Oğuz Türkkan. I used their statements in my favour and was acquitted.

– Did you meet with Atsız afterwards?

– No, I didn't. But he liked me, you see. Because of my behaviour in court. I liked him too. We never had the chance to meet again afterwards. In any case, our case was such that it was like a gathering of 23 people. Most of us got to know one another there. I hadn't known Zeki Velidi Togan, Hasan Ferit Cansever or Orhan Şaik Gökyay before. I met Atsız a few times, but I never had the chance to go and visit him at his home. Besides, I was busy trying to finish my studies. Later on, I left Istanbul. I don't know his son, Yağmur Atsız. He's on a different front now. From what I've read, I don't know him personally. His wife used to come to court, so we knew her. In other words, I never thought of going to his house to visit him.

– Could we say, in a way, that those on trial were sacrificed?

– Now let me tell you this: Zeki Velidi Togan, Hüseyin Nihal Atsız and Reha Oğuz Türkkan were seen as ringleaders in that case—three leaders, as it were. So, one group gathered around Z. Velidi Togan and were accused of certain things. Another group gathered around Nihal Atsız. Another group gathered around Reha Oğuz Türkkan. Nihal Atsız was charged because of what he had written – spreading racist and Turanist propaganda… Oğuz Türkkan was also charged for his actions: the aim was to establish a secret society with the intention of overthrowing the government.

– Did such a society actually exist?

– Some have claimed that such a society did exist. There is no written document to prove it. But Nihal Atsız is in no position to deny what he has written. He has been writing since as far back as 1930. His writings are out in the open. He is a man of honour. It would not be fitting for him to deny what he has written. That is why, with his head held high, he declared, '*Yes*, *I am a racist*, *I am a Turanist*, *and I take pride in it*,' and did not waver from his initial stance. But is Reha Oğuz in a position to say, 'Yes, I did establish such a society'? He faces a prison sentence of between four and ten years.

– So, did that organisation actually exist? Was it ever established?

– No, come on—just a handful of students. One of them was 22 years old; at the time, Reha Oğuz Türkkan was 24. If the society was founded in 1940, Reha Oğuz—born in 1920—would have been 20. So, a man with no military force or weapons—how could he possibly overthrow the government? With students, surely. Well, a bit of nationalist fervour; Oğuz Türkkan was also, well, he'd only just finished secondary school and was at

university at the time. There was an association called the Book Lovers' Association

. Their first act was to have Ziya Gökalp's book ***The Principles of Turkism*** [36]printed using the new alphabet. Even that was frowned upon at the time. They were viewed as suspicious characters. Zeki Velidi was accused—because he had previously been President of Bashkortostan—of plotting to overthrow the government and drag Turkey into the war on Germany's side, given that Germany was fighting against Russia at the time, in order to ensure Russia's defeat and secure independence for the Turks there.

– Who were among those lying in the coffins and cemeteries?

– To be honest, I cannot remember them all, but the one who suffered the most there was Reha Oğuz Türkkan; in other words, he sustained permanent damage to his eyesight. Nihal Atsız was there, Orhan Şaik was there...

– Was Alparslan Türkeş there?

– No, they were already in a military prison. The soldiers were not tortured. As active-duty soldiers, there were Alparslan Türkeş and Fethi Tevetoğlu. In other words, they were active-duty soldiers. As reserve officers, there were Hasan Ferit Cansever, Zeki Sofuoğlu, Fazıl Hisarcıklı, and one other person who was a reserve officer.

– There's an article by Savaş Fer…

– But he wouldn't have written that.

– It's an article under the name Savaş Fer that's somewhat critical of Atsız. Do you know anything about it?

– Have you seen the article?

36 Reha Oğuz Türkkan's *The Principles of Turkism* has been published by Historia Publishing House, remaining faithful to the original.

– Yes, I had read about it in Hayri Yıldırım's work* The 3 May 1944 Racism and Turanism Trial* [37]. In fact, the article was written by Reha Oğuz, but he used the pen name Savaş Fer.

– His first name was Cihat and his surname was Fer, but Oğuz Türkkan was keen on pure Turkish at the time. He said, *'Your name shouldn't be Cihat, let it be Savaş*.' Cihat Savaş Fer. But when the court clerk was writing it down, as 'Fer' is a single-syllable word, he wrote 'Savaş' and 'Fer' together; that's why it appears as 'Savaşfer' in all the books and such. So it's not even his real name, then.

– What happened to the relationship between Nihal Atsız and Reha Oğuz following the events of '44? Do you know anything about it?

– Let me put it this way: because of the name 'Oğuz Türkkan' and due to the court case, he probably couldn't find a decent job here, so he left and went to America. He lived there for many years. In other words, he made his living there. That's why he had no contact with Atsız. They went their separate ways after the case. Perhaps they may have written for the same magazines.

– Reha, did you meet with Oğuz Türkkan after he went to America?

– We met a few times after he returned to Turkey. Later, Oğuz Türkkan devoted himself to educational matters and the like. He became a lecturer in America. As for what I can say about Atsız, I don't have much information regarding their personal relationship. But his stance in court was considered to be that of a ringleader. Take this as an example: Hasan Ferit Cansever, one of the former members of the Turkish Associations—and indeed one of its earliest members. He is counted amongst the founders. The man's only 'crime' was that Atsız and Türkkan had engaged in a public dispute through the press. He tried to reconcile them, saying, 'This *is shameful; it is unbecoming.'*

37 Hayri Yıldırım, 3 May 1944 Racism and Turanism Trial, Togan Publications, p. 47, 2015, Istanbul

One of the organisers of the meeting at Zeki Velidi's house. Zeki Velidi Togan was also among them. In other words, Hasan Ferit Cansever's sole 'crime' was this: trying to reconcile them.

– Did any other issue arise between Atsız and Türkkan apart from the matter of correcting articles in the journal? Was this incident the sole cause of the rift?

– Oğuz Türkkan did not possess Nihal Atsız's knowledge of Turkish history and literature. At the time, Oğuz Türkkan was a younger student studying law. Hadn't Nihal Atsız been Fuat Köprülü's assistant?

– Yes.

– She was 15 years older than Oğuz Türkkan. She had studied Turkish literature and Turkology; in other words, Oğuz Türkkan could not compete with her in those fields. Oğuz Türkkan, for his part, was a man with a good command of French who kept up well with European literature.

– In his work *The Crusades Against Turkism*[38], Atsız criticises Türkkan. He is particularly critical of the fact that he became an American citizen.

– In Nihal Atsız's eyes, being an American citizen is not a good thing. Yet today, people are desperate to become American citizens. Oğuz Türkkan's father, for instance, was the Director-General of the Land Registry and Cadastre. He was one of the top bureaucrats of his time, but naturally, because of this case, they ended up on the list of undesirables. Many of them were not hired by the state. He, too, found a solution in moving to America. He made his living there.

– What would you like to say about Nejdet Sançar?

– He is following in his brother's footsteps.

38 Atsız, The March to Çanakkale, The Crusade Against Turkism, İrfan Publishing House, 3rd edition, 2015.

– Did Nejdet Sançar end up in the coffin room?

– I don't know; perhaps he did. As I said, he's following in his brother's footsteps.

– Is there anything else you'd like to say?

– Since they're all graduates of the Faculty of Literature, Orhan Şaik Gökyay was Atsız's classmate. He's also the director of the State Conservatoire in Ankara. İsmet Pasha comes there every week to listen to concerts. He welcomes and hosts İsmet Pasha. Because he was Atsız's friend, when letters were found at his home—you know, like the *'Et tu, Brutus*?' story—he, too, was automatically implicated alongside Atsız. They exchanged a great many letters. The letters are written in a very sincere and literary style. They are not just ordinary letters. In fact, there was a bit of a joke in court: they'd write to each other, 'Greetings from so-and-so over here,' and so on—it's customary in letters, isn't it?—so eight to ten people's greetings would be included from that side. To avoid making the letter too long, they'd say, *'The protocol applies.'* In other words, everyone's greetings are included here, and over there, the greetings of everyone who's sending greetings are included. The prosecutor realised that there were secret protocols between them. Just think of the word 'protocol' – that's the sort of case it was.

– After you were acquitted, were you followed or anything like that? Did it affect your life?

– Even though I was acquitted, there's still a file on it. There's a record of it. It couldn't have been overlooked. But I didn't feel it in any way. For example, a letter that Alparslan Türkeş wrote to Atsız was found in his home. They put it in the file. It was read out in court. In it, he says that there was **an 'Open Letter to Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu'** by Nihal Atsız in **Orkun** Magazine; Alparslan Türkeş was already acquainted with Atsız's family and had been corresponding with them previously. He'd met him whilst he was a military cadet; in his letter, Türkeş wrote, *'I took the magazine to the officers' mess*

and read it aloud there; *everyone listened."* Among those listening was a general, who said, *"Bravo, it's very well written; give it to me so I can take it home and read it again at my leisure*." He wrote this to Atsız. This became evidence of a crime. Taking the magazine to the officers' club and reading it aloud is akin to bringing politics into the army. I had no such connection. Just a shared fate in prison… What else can I say? For example, Fethi Tevetoğlu was a military doctor, but he knew Atsız and wrote poems and such in his magazines. There was also Cemal Oğuz Öcal, who wrote poems too. His work was also published in those magazines. In the end, it was clear that the Military Court of Appeal did not consider the No. 1 martial law court where we were tried to be impartial. It concluded that a fair trial had not taken place and therefore changed the court. In the first trial, ten or eleven people were acquitted. They were released without receiving a sentence. But the others remained in custody. Their sentences included, for example, 10 years for Zeki Velidi, and sentences ranging from 5 to 10 years for Nihal Atsız and Oğuz Türkkan. This time, they were retried at the No. 2 martial law court, and all were acquitted there. Thus, the case was found to be flawed. The Military Court of Cassation overturned the decision of the first court.

So, to conclude, I can say this: as Atsız was charged on the basis of his writings, his writings were deemed to constitute propaganda for racism and Turanism. He did not deny what he had written and, with his head held high, declared, *'Yes, I am a racist, I am a Turanist. I take pride in this*.' You may not be able to find this in other sources. These are his own words, in other words. Ultimately, it was established that this was not a crime, and the Military Court of Cassation overturned the ruling. Afterwards, Atsız never strayed from his path with his writings until his death. In that respect, he was an idealist. He never compromised on his beliefs.

– **Thank you.**

HAYRANİ ILGAR

(25 May 2016, Izmir)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I was born in Akşehir in 1924. But I didn't live in Akşehir for very long. After finishing secondary school, I didn't return to Akşehir. That's because all my relatives live in Izmir. I joined the civil service in 1942. I've been living in and around Izmir since 1942. I worked as a civil servant for the railways in Ödemiş, Tire, Balıkesir and Bandırma. But whilst doing this job, I never stopped writing. I read books constantly and sent articles to magazines. I wrote articles for newspapers. For example, the **Ege Ekspres** newspaper was published daily in Izmir. I sent an article to them. I noticed that the very next day, my article appeared as the lead editorial, unsigned. The following day I sent another one, and that was published too. When I sent the third one, I included my address this time. There were no mobile phones back then. As soon as I'd included my address, a letter arrived straight away. *'Come and see us,'* they said. I went. *The* young editor-in-chief *asked, 'You're retired, aren't you?' 'Yes*, *I'm retired*,' I replied. *'Let's give you a desk to sit at. Instead of writing at home, write your articles here, and we'll give you a small monthly allowance,'* he said. *'All right,'* I said. I worked at the **Ege Ekspres** newspaper. I wrote my articles there. I even saw them mentioned in a thesis written in Niğde about my life. I must have written nearly a hundred articles for that newspaper. I don't remember them. I've completely forgotten. I published various magazines myself—such as **Küçük Dergi, Uyanık and Komünizmle Savaş**—using my own money. I always sent them off.

Nobody took out a subscription. I didn't take a penny from anyone. I have four children; I cut back on their living expenses. I sent the money for these.

– How did you meet Mr Atsız?

– Whenever I travelled from Izmir to Istanbul, I would come across them. I used to visit Atsız Hoca at the library. I visited him at Nejdet San-çar's house a few times.

– In Ankara?

– No, at his home in Istanbul. My visits were mainly in connection with the articles in **Ötüken** Magazine. For example, there was a dispute between Ali Fuat Başgil and Atsız; it became a public row in the press. I wrote a book about them: ***So-called and True Nationalism (The Atsız and Başgil Struggle)***. I took the manuscript with me and gave it to Professor Atsız. Professor Atsız said, *'You can collect it from me next time you come.' 'All right,'* I said, and left. On my next visit, he said, *"I've read it…"* He praised me, saying, *"You have a very fine writing style."* Then he said, *"Publish this."* It didn't occur to either of us. I didn't ask him for a foreword for that book.

– Did you publish the book?

– It was published. I had it published and distributed it everywhere. Many of my friends here told me, *'After reading this book, we learnt about Turkish nationalism and turned towards it. We were classical nationalists.*'

– When did you first meet Mr Atsız?

– We met between 1962 and 1963.

– What are your thoughts on Mr Atsız's literary work?

– I once read a short piece about Atsız somewhere. I'll never forget it. It said, *'He is a writer so powerful he could dismount a horseman from his horse.'* I can't remember who said it now.

– It was İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal who said this.

– Is that so? That remark has stuck in my mind. There is one very important trait about Atsız that one ought to know. No matter where it came from or who it was from, Atsız Bey would always reply. There is an expression: '*the Istanbul gentleman*'. Atsız and Nejdet Hoca were more mild-mannered; they were true Istanbul gentlemen. Calm, dignified, and gentlemanly.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's character as a historian?

– In my opinion, there is no historian to rival him. I saw an article online; when listing historians, they had omitted Atsız's name. I was outraged. I wrote a message. Atsız is one of Turkey's leading historians. He is a significant historian.

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's Turkic nationalist character?

– Professor Atsız never used the term 'nationalism'. He always used the term 'Turkish nationalism'. It is clear today that in Turkey, in the classical sense, all nationalists have championed the name 'Turkish nationalism'. Atsız is the leader of Turkish nationalism. The events of 1944 were a world unto themselves. Martial law was declared in Ankara on the very day of his trial. Ankara was in such turmoil. They declared martial law.

– What are your thoughts on the Events of '44?

– You know about the events of '44; you've read about them. I don't have much personal connection to them. Because I wasn't involved in that business. I wasn't in Istanbul or Ankara. As I was living in Izmir, I remained at a distance.

– Is there an interesting incident you experienced with Mr Atsız?

– There was an interesting incident involving Mr Atsız. I had a camera. I went to visit Mr Atsız with my two sons. I sat my two sons down next to Mr Atsız; I wanted to take their photograph as a memento. I took the photo, and then we were going to have the prints developed by the photographer. The photographer ruined the film. I couldn't get that shot. It was gone. That's the sort of thing that happened with Atsız Hoca. I'd always pop in to see him there when I went to the Süleymaniye Library. I'd visit Nihal Bey at his home.

– What were Atsız Bey's different sides?

– A distinctive aspect was that whilst he appeared stern in his writings, as a person he was very gentle in conversation. He was mild-mannered, gentle – in other words, a kind-hearted person.

– What was Atsız Bey like in terms of his demeanour, mannerisms and behaviour?

– Well, to be honest, I didn't see him laugh very often. I never saw him smile. He always looked serious. He had a very gentlemanly demeanour. He was calm. He was very calm. I used to write him letters – there were no mobile phones back then – and he would reply to me by letter. He never failed to reply to any of my letters. I kept track of them all. I know that whoever wrote to him from here, he would certainly reply.

– Have you met Mrs Bedriye?

– I don't remember. I'm sure I met her, but I can't recall a thing.

– You're someone who knew Nejdet Sançar well.

– Yes.

– What would you like to say about Nejdet Sançar?

– Nejdet Sançar is more mild-mannered than Atsız Hoca. Atsız Hoca is harsh in his writings. He is gentle in social life, but Nejdet Hoca is gentler and more calm by nature than Atsız. I used to visit Nejdet Hoca at his home in Istanbul. In terms of ideology, there is no difference whatsoever between him and his elder brother. They share the same views.

– Professor, as you know, Atsız Bey's religious views are much debated. What are your thoughts on this matter? Have you ever discussed it?

– Let me tell you about our conversations. In those conversations, he would say: *'99 per cent of Turkey is Muslim. We cannot speak against Islam. It offends and upsets society.'* But he himself believed in Islam and religion exactly as I do today. I learnt this lesson from him. Islam is a movement that destroys Turkishness. I do not accept Islam.

– Can we say that Mr Atsız was not a Muslim?

– I can say that he was not.

– Was there a problem between Mr Atsız and Türkeş?

– I know from the press. I don't have much information. I don't know if there was any correspondence or conversation between them; I wasn't a witness.

– There is a book that Mr Atsız began writing before his death and which went missing after his passing. Do you have any thoughts on this matter?

– They mentioned Buğra at one point. That's what I've heard. It's a work on history. They said the drafts were in Buğra's possession. But I wouldn't say Buğra really followed in his father's footsteps. I don't know his views, but I don't think he was very open about it.

– There's been a growing admiration for Atsız in recent times.

– Yes.

– What are your thoughts on this, given both the works being written and the intense interest shown by young people?

– I've noticed this about the Turkish people. Once they take a liking to a movement, they go to extremes in everything. It's the same with Islam—they go to such extremes that it becomes a mess. It's the same with individuals too. I don't like extremism. As for Atsız, I can't really call it 'extremism'—there is a love for Atsız. But Atsız is worthy of this love… So I can't say they're going to extremes. For example, there's the Atsız Cultural Centre in Izmir. There are some in Istanbul as well. These are all still going strong. There's a real admiration for Atsız amongst our young people. I can't really accept the kind of blind devotion people show towards individuals. But I think Atsız is an exception… I haven't really kept up with his written works.

– Is there anything else you'd like to say?

– There's nothing else to say apart from what we've already discussed.

– Thank you.

– Not at all. It was good of you to come.

YAŞAR EMEN

(9 July 2016, Mersin)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I am Yaşar Emen from Tarsus. Also known as Hafiz Yaşar. I was born in Tarsus in 1932. I started primary school in 1940. I finished primary school in 1945. I started secondary school in 1946. I graduated in 1950. In 1951, I attended Mersin Commercial High School. There, my teacher, Zeki Sofuoğlu, was my Turkish language teacher. He was the one who inspired me to join the cause of Turkish nationalism. Ever since then, I have been passionately devoted to this cause. I then entered the civil service. I first became involved in irrigated agriculture. I worked in irrigated agriculture between 1953 and 1957. In 1952, I met Mr Fikret Gürbüzer and we founded the Turkish Nationalists' Association. Unfortunately, in 1953, our association was closed down by the Democratic Party and fined 10 lira. I entered political life with the Democratic Party in 1950. After the association was closed down, I resigned from it and joined the People's Party. In 1954, the Democratic Party also closed down the People's Party, imposing a fine of 2.5 lira. The party's name was then changed to the Republican People's Party. It merged with the Peasants' Party to become the Republican Peasants' National Party. Later, Osman Bölükbaşı left the party; after returning from India, Mr Alparslan Türkeş joined the Republican Peasants' National Party as an inspector. He stood as a candidate at the 1965 congress and, thanks to a handful of nationalists from Anatolia, became the party leader. At the 1969 party congress in Adana, its name was changed to the Nationalist Movement Party.

Its emblem was also

was to be the Grey Wolf, but unfortunately, due to opposition from the bigots amongst us, it became the three crescents. To this day, I have worked as a member of the MHP in the Tarsus, Mersin, Adana and Istanbul branches. I returned to Mersin in 2009 and currently live there. I am a member of the MHP and I strive to raise the children and members of the 'ocak' (clan) as nationalists. I am 84 years old. God willing, I shall continue with this cause until the day I die. May God protect the Turks! That is, in short, it.

– How did you meet Atsız?

– We first met through correspondence in 1951. We founded the association. It was closed down and so on, but we kept writing to each other. When I went to Istanbul in 1971, we visited his home in Maltepe, Istanbul, through Durmuş Akkuş, who is now a lawyer. We met there. I was fortunate enough to kiss his hand. We exchanged ideas. We continued to correspond until his death. We sent each other greetings. When he was in prison, Mr Türkeş had come to Adana. I asked, *'Colonel, when will you secure Atsız Hoca's release?'* He replied, *'We're doing everything we can.'* He was subsequently released following a pardon from the President. Professor Atsız passed away in 1975. That is how I came to know him. We also corresponded with his brother, Nejdet Sançar. Later, they honoured us with their presence at a 'Night of Heroism' event we organised in Tarsus, where they gave a speech. That is how I came to know him as well.

– What are your thoughts on Atsız Bey's works?

– As nationalists, we—the nationalist youth of Turkey—came to know Atsız through the books ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*** and ***The Grey Wolves Rise Again***, and it was thanks to him that we attained a sense of Turkish identity. Subsequently, his other works were published: ***The Mad Wolf*** and ***The Man of the Spirit***. In short, nationalists throughout Turkey were inspired by Atsız Hoca's spark to dedicate themselves to this

cause.

– Were there any similarities or differences between Nihal Atsız and Nejdet Sançar?

– Both were men of the cause, but Atsız Hoca was the leader. He, too, was a man of the cause who never wavered. They worked as library clerks. They were imprisoned in 1944. They lost their jobs. Both were men of the same cause. But Atsız Hoca was a man who wrote such scathing articles that he could bring a horseman down from his horse. He made no concessions; he was a man of uncompromising principles.

– Did you discuss the events of '44 with Zeki Sofuoğlu?

– He was a second lieutenant at the time, Professor, when he was arrested. As Atsız Hoca was a civilian, he was thrown into the coffin cell. There were five people thrown into the coffin cell.

– Who else was there, Professor?

– Nihal Atsız was there. Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, as far as I recall. Sadi Özbek, for example, was so large he barely fit in the coffin. Reha Oğuz Türkkan was also put in the coffin; he lost his eyesight too. They lit five 500-watt bulbs above his head. He went to America for eye treatment, may he rest in peace. I never got to meet him. I did meet Osman Yüksel.

– Did you ever discuss Atsız with Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti?

– Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti was a student at the Faculty of Language, History and Geography at the time. Selahattin Ertürk was also there; these two students were constantly by Atsız Bey's side. Ertürk also wrote for *Orkun*. For example, he once said: *'True heroes are those who gather flowers for others amidst torrential downpours.'* He also said: *'In practice, the role of dogs that have drunk wolf's blood is significant when it comes to wolves.'* In other words, he would say that whilst the wolf survives, the role of dogs that have drunk wolf's blood is significant.

– Was there any animosity between Türkeş and Atsız? If so, what was the reason?

– As far as we know, Atsız Hoca was a leader who never made concessions. It was Atsız Hoca who mentored Mr Türkeş. But unfortunately, in party politics, concessions are made. This did not sit well with Atsız Hoca. There were rifts, but they were still on the same side of the cause.

– Did Türkeş attend Atsız's funeral?

– No.

– Did you attend?

– No. I was in Adana. But I went to pay my respects the following day.

– Did Türkeş go?

– Yes. Because of the dispute, he didn't go so that no unpleasant incidents would occur there. But he shed many tears.

– What happened with the flag incident at the 69th Congress?

– "The crescent or the wolf?" Wasn't that the incident?

– Yes.

– Before the 1969 Congress, Mr Alparslan Türkeş would occasionally summon all the nationalists, Turkists and activists in Turkey to Ankara. He had had a wolf with a crescent drawn; the party's emblem was to be a grey wolf with a crescent. The crescent was to represent Islam, and the wolf Turkishness. We all agreed and gave our approval. We arrived at the Congress, which was held in Adana by Imam

A man named Faruk Akkülah, a teacher of Islamic preaching. He was the one who prepared the convention hall. In fact, he had joined our party on a deal. *'If you make me provincial chairman, I'll join your party,'* he had said. At the time, Fikret Gürbüzer and the rest of us did not accept this. We said, 'If he joins the party, works for a year or two and is successful, we'll take him on and make him provincial chairman.' However, whether it was due to financial circumstances or something else, our other senior members in Adana at the time accepted this, and the man really showed his true colours there. Was he a wolf or a crescent? He turned the whole congress upside down. Unfortunately, they sent him to the General Administrative Council in Ankara. Those men won that too. One of them was Hüseyin Üzmez. Now, this man was against the Grey Wolf. He was elected to the General Administrative Council. Because of him, guns were drawn. The congress turned on itself. Commando Mustafa went there in tears, threw the Bozkurt flag down in front of Türkeş, and left. When they won, the emblem became the crescent. That's the situation.

– What was Atsız's home and life like?

– At that time, his home was in Maltepe. It was a ramshackle house. I was astonished when I went there, to be honest. The man didn't even have a sofa set. I was left speechless. He said to me, *'This is Atsız.'*

– Did he say that himself?

– Of course. He said, *'This is Atsız.'* In our eyes, they were giants.

– What topics did you discuss when you met?

– We'd talk about all sorts of things. I said to him, *'Leave religious matters to the clergy. You're the standard-bearer of Turkish nationalism. Write your articles on nationalism.'*

He said, *'Is that how you speak?'* I replied, *'Whoever it may be, we will warn them.'*

– What were his religious views? Did he discuss these matters with you?

– He had faith. Because if he hadn't had faith, there's a line in the poem 'Selam' that reads: *'In the sea of His mercy, souls find refreshment'* [39]. I also discussed these matters with Refet Körüklü; he said, *'God* forbid…' *'I even had to shut him up. He had faith. They're lying,' he* said.

– Is there an interesting incident you experienced with Mr Atsız?

– At one point, Atsız Hoca had been silent for a long time. I sent him a festive greeting. In that greeting, I wrote: *'Atsız Bey, I would like to remind you that your silence is harmful to the cause.' 'How dare you speak to me like that? Are we the sort of men who remain silent?'* he said. I'm a mischievous sort of chap.

– Do you know anything about the murder of Ali Balseven?

– Yes. The one nicknamed 'Biber Ali'… I didn't know him personally, but we'd heard his name as a Turkish nationalist; he'd been murdered. After he was killed, Türkeş came to Tarsus. I said, *'Biber Ali has been murdered.' 'I didn't make it in time; I couldn't save that lad,'* he said. *'How was he killed?'* we asked. We used to ask questions, brother. We weren't the sort of people who blindly followed the party leader. We asked about everything. For example, when he returned from India, I went to his house. I went to visit him in Ankara. I knocked on the door and his daughter Ayzıt came out. *'Who are you?'* she asked. *'Yaşar Emen from Tarsus,'* I said. Türkeş had never seen me before. We'd been corresponding. We'd been writing to each other from India.

39 The poem 'Selam' by Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, from his work *Yolların Sonu*. Atsız, *Yolların Sonu*, Ötüken Neşriyat, 21st edition, 2017, Istanbul, p. 38

He arrived. *"Is that you, Yaşar*?" he asked. *"Welcome*,*"* and so on, he said; we sat down, and *I* said, *"Colonel, we're not in love with your dark eyebrows. If you're going to save this nation, we'll follow you." "Of course, we've come to save the homeland,"* he said. Just then, eight or ten civilians arrived. But they were wearing officers' boots. They spoke in code. *'Colonel, when you came to the theatre, we couldn't really talk properly…'* and so on… After they'd left, we always called Mr Türkeş 'Colonel'. *'Colonel…'* I said; *'They're* officers…' *'Don't say a word, don't get involved in everything. They're from our army,'* he said. The leading figures of the Turkish nationalists—Refet Körüklü, Zeki Sofuoğlu, Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti and so on—used to call each other 'Uncle'. Their password was 'Uncle'. 'Uncle, come in,' 'Uncle, go.'

– Did you ever discuss the events of '44 with Mr Türkeş?

– Honestly, we discussed a wide range of topics. At the time, he was a second lieutenant; there was a senator, and he was a captain. As they were from the military, they weren't held in the coffin cell. However, according to his own account, they pulled out his fingernails; he told us that. They had tortured him. He used to correspond with Atsız Hoca. They found the letters and arrested him for that too.

– Did you meet Atsız's wife?

– No. I haven't. They were in Germany.

– What would you like to say about Nejdet Sançar?

– We'd organised a 'Night of Heroism' programme. They came along with Türkeş Bey's youngest daughter. They spoke at our event, and we had a chat. But whatever the case, both Atsız and Türkeş Bey dedicated their entire lives to this cause. May God have mercy on them. Good times and bad, sweet and bitter days

. But neither of them were people who had given up on the cause. They did not sell out.

– There is a book that Atsız Bey was working on, which later went missing. Do you have any information on this matter?

– According to Refet Körüklü, there was a history book, but it was stolen. Did the MIT steal it, or did his son take it? It was said to contain very important writings on history. People used to say that if it were published, it would shake Turkey to its core. But they lost it.

– Do you keep up with the works written about Atsız?

– There is a book by Hayri Bey. I've read that one. I haven't really been able to get hold of the others.

– What was Atsız Bey's influence amongst you young people?

– Yes, of course it was. His books are like sparks. It was that influence that shaped us into who we are today. Through his writings. Zeki Sofuoğlu would bring us *__Orkun__* magazine and give it to us. We drew inspiration from him.

– Did Zeki Sofuoğlu engage in Turkish nationalist propaganda in class?

– Of course, my dear, absolutely. He was the one who brought us up. One day, they'd put up an article by Hasan Ali Yücel on the wall. He walked in and asked, *'Who put this up?'* He explained what sort of communist Hasan Ali Yücel was. How he'd oppressed them during the 1944 events. At the Güneş Cinema in Mersin, a film critical of Turkish nationalism had been screened – was it 1952 or something? *'Blimey, are you lot human beings or what? Why are you just sitting here? Go and storm the*

cinema,' he said.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

– As you know, the cause of Turkish nationalism began before Ziya Gökalp. The late Ziya Gökalp wrote *The Principles **of Turkism***. Yusuf Akçura, then Atsız Bey, took up the cause, and eventually Alparslan Türkeş adopted it politically. The cause of Turkish nationalism has become part of the people's heritage. This cause will never die. I have two sons. My eldest son's name is Alparslan Nihat, named after Alparslan Türkeş and in honour of the Great Alparslan of 1071, as well as in honour of Arif Nihat Asya. My younger son is Atsız Bozkurt. I named them after both leaders.

– **Thank you**.

– You're welcome.

PROF. DR. GÜLÇİN ÇANDARLIOŠLU

(24 August 2016, Istanbul)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I'm rather curious about this field, and I get the impression that there are very few who don't know my name. In fact, those who don't share our views know me better and treat me much more kindly. I've been hurt by the behaviour of some nationalist friends. But my social-democratic friends have always treated me with much greater respect and courtesy. Anyway. I was born on 29 March 1942 in Eskişehir. My mother's family came from Crimea to Romania, and from Romania to Eskişehir. My father was from Antalya; he was a military pilot in Eskişehir, flying the biplanes of the Second World War. Ever since I was a child, I always said I would become a teacher. So, visiting historical sites, browsing second-hand bookshops and this passion for books dates back to my childhood… Later on, wherever I went, I set up a library, published a magazine… I specialise mainly in Pre-Islamic Turkish Political History and Cultural History, particularly the Uyghur Period. I know Ottoman history, but only at a student's level. I'm no expert. So I'd say, 'Don't ask me about the Ottomans.' I tell everyone: whatever field you're working in, stick to that field. Don't talk about the others. Now I see people on television and in the newspapers talking about fields they're not experts in. I mean, excuse me, what do you know that you're talking about? Sometimes they laugh at me when I say I don't want to talk about the Ottomans—'Why aren't you talking about it? You know about it, but…'

' they say. All right, I know, but I'm no expert—why should I speak on it? I say I deliberately avoid it. I'm trying to set an example so that you, too, won't speak on our field. Also, I don't like discussing current politics. I'm a historian. I've got nothing to do with politics. When I say 'pre-Islamic', let there be no doubt: Alhamdulillah, I'm a Muslim. My faith is complete. I've been on the Umrah and come back.

– When did you first meet Mr Atsız?

– Let's say my more conscious acquaintance with the Professor was when he was working at the Süleymaniye Library and I was Professor Togan's assistant. One day, the Professor said to me: *"My dear, I once read the *Oğuzname* in Persian; Atsız wrote it in the old script. I rang him up and spoke to him. He's expecting you. Go to the Süleymaniye Library, find Atsız. Tell him I sent you. Introduce yourself. He'll read his own writings to you; you write them down and type them up." "All right, Professor,"* I said. I went, and we met Professor Atsız. He read out what he'd written, I wrote it down using the Latin alphabet, then I typed it up. I gave it to Professor Togan. This work took 10–15 days, working with Professor Atsız. But of course, once you've got to know Professor Atsız, once you've worked alongside him for 10–15 days, how could you ever part ways with him again? No, he couldn't. Of course, our visits to Süleymaniye continued. Visits to his home during festivals and such… He has two sons, and whenever I've gone there since they were children, I've got to know them as well. We're still in touch with Buğra. He works in our field too. He specialises in Turkish Language and Literature, but it's still related to the Turkic world. He's currently living in Canada. Buğra is involved with the new editions of the Professor's publications and so on.

– As a historian yourself, what would you like to say about Atsız Bey's approach to history?

– Well, let me put it this way: Professor Atsız is, after all, a graduate in Turkish Language and Literature. So history is his secondary specialism. His primary one is literature. And then there's such a talent in him… He writes beautifully. I suppose you've read *Bozkurtlar*.

– I have, Professor.

– If you say you haven't read it, I'll give you a good thrashing – if you've taken such an interest in Atsız and haven't read it. I can't really say much, though, as he focused more on Ottoman studies, so I can't comment much on the historical accuracy or inaccuracy of his work. But I can say this: he's the man who's made so many young people fall in love with nationalism, history and literature. Now, when he writes history, as a writer, his composition and language are beautiful; he writes so beautifully, it flows, and it's a pleasure to read. You get completely absorbed in it. Of course, I can't say for certain how deeply his writings delve into the subject, or whether they fall short.

– For example, Professor, what do you make of the Kür Şad incident?

– There is just one thing, though: as you may be aware, the Kür Şad incident is set within a novel – *Bozkurtlar*. It does not appear anywhere else. Kür Şad is a fictional character… Whether he is a historical figure or not remains a matter of debate. It needs to be properly researched… Because I have not come across anything in the sources to confirm whether he existed or not. He may or may not have existed.

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's literary persona?

– He's absolutely brilliant. If anyone says a word against his

literary talent, I'll have a go at them. He's marvellous.

– When you hear the names 'Mr Atsız' and 'Turkish nationalism', what springs to mind?

– I'd put it this way: he was the boldest in speaking and writing on these matters, especially back in those days… Everyone was talking and writing about things, but I've never seen anyone as bold as him. Brave on the issues of nationalism and Turkism… He spoke freely against the politicians of the time, didn't care about going in and out of prison; they put the Professor in prison again when he was old. He was over 70 at the time. Everyone appealed to the President for a pardon on account of his age. He didn't want a pardon.

– Is there an interesting story about an incident you experienced with Mr Atsız?

– Rather than an 'interesting' incident, let me tell you how our friendship with the Hoca continued. Now, of course, the Hoca had retired. He had a home in Maltepe, and we'd visit him during the holidays. Occasionally, depending on the situation, we'd pop round to ask him something. Also, at the end of every academic year, I'd gather three or four of my hard-working, nationalist students, introduce them to the Professor, and we'd pay him a visit. That's how Abdulkadir Donuk, Yaşar Büyükoğlu and others met the Professor back then. I don't know how long their friendship lasted after that.

– I also spoke to Yaşar (Büyükoğlu). He mentioned that he'd gone with you.

– See, there you go—it's the same story. Donuk probably saw him more often as he was in Istanbul. Yaşar, of course, might have seen him less often as he went to Gaziantep. I don't know the details of that. I was simply taking that year's hard-working students to the Professor. I'd ring him and say, *'Professor, I've gathered the students.' 'How many of you are there?'* he'd ask straight away. I'd tell him the number. *'All right, come to my house,'* he'd say.

– Professor, what topics did you discuss at those meetings?

– We'd banter with the children about what they were up to and what they were reading, and there'd be a bit of gossip about me and so on. For instance, later on, he himself would come to the Institute of Turkish Studies – now the Institute of Eurasian Studies, but back then it was Turkish Studies. I'd worked there a great deal in my time. I asked the Professor a few times. *'Professor, please* do *let me know when you're coming this way* so *I can pop round to see you*.' Especially when he was coming to the Institute of Turkish Studies, he'd let me know, or if I was feeling down and wanted to have a chat with an elder to let off steam, I'd say, *'Professor, honestly, I'm feeling really awful, I'm in a right state – when are you coming this way? I'd like to have a bit of a chat and get your thoughts on things*.' *"Oh, we'll come then, since you're feeling down. Let's meet tomorrow at Türkiyat*," he'd say, and he'd come—may he rest in peace. I'd tell him. He'd just say, *"Never mind, never mind, never mind…"* and his Islam, his faith, wasn't half bad. People say he wasn't a Muslim, don't they? There was nothing of the sort about the Professor. He was a Muslim, but he'd crack jokes. When I'd get bored and start venting, he'd say first, *"Never mind, it's not worth it…"* and so on. Then he'd say, *'Never mind, I'll say a Shaman's prayer and it'll sort itself out*.' He knew full well that nothing would be resolved by that sort of prayer, but it was just a joke. Because he made jokes like that, there were, of course, arguments about whether Hoca was a Muslim or not – you'd hear them – but as far as I was concerned, Hoca was a Muslim.

– From what you observed, what were Atsız Bey's distinctive traits?

– In my view, he was a normal person. There was nothing unusual about him. I can say this: he always helped his students and young people. He'd offer advice and provide support whenever he could. I got to know his family life—his wife and children. He also had a spiritual daughter, Kaniye Hanım, who took care of the housework and such. In recent times, his wife has also become a good researcher. She's probably doing it for the

money,

She was a lecturer at a university in Germany. Mrs Bedriye Atsız. She, too, has long since passed away. They were in Munich, Germany, and the Professor would go back and forth, and she would go back and forth. Buğra also studied Turkish Language and Literature in Germany. I was going to go to Munich to work. The Professor got in touch with Mrs Bedriye. *'Gülçin is coming; please look after her,'* he said. So I went to visit his wife. They took an interest in me – offering tea, coffee, meals, and even inviting me out for a meal on another day. Buğra also guided me through my early, inexperienced days. Thank goodness for them. I mean, if they'd been on bad terms, when he said, 'Gülçin is coming; please look after her,' what would they have said to me, wouldn't they? There was no such rift.

– What sort of person was Mr Atsız in terms of temperament and character?

– I never saw him get angry.

– So you didn't see the irritable side he displayed in his writings in his daily life?

– He'd get annoyed with non-nationalists, but with his students and guests he was always gentle, cheerful and joking. I'd say anyone who claims otherwise is lying.

– Professor, what foreign languages did Mr Atsız know?

– I never asked him. But his English and German weren't too bad, I suppose, given that he travelled to those countries. As a professor of Turkish Language and Literature, he must have known the Turkish dialects as well. Because most of them are taught in Turkish Language and Literature programmes.

– Did you attend Mr Atsız's funeral?

– Unfortunately not. I think I was out of Turkey at the time.

– What are your thoughts on the 'Case of 44', in which Zeki Velidi Togan was also tried?

– It was an injustice; neither Professor Atsız nor Professor Togan ever used the slogan 'to unite *the Turks under one flag*'. What they claimed was that Turanism was not about uniting the Turks under one flag. The nationalist academics I knew—those labelled as 'Turanists'—all knew full well that the Turks could not be united under a single flag. They said only this: *'Wherever there are Turks in the world, let them live free and independent'*—that is all. They did not say they should come together. Because they could not. They all knew their history well.

– Did you ever have the chance to meet Nejdet Sançar?

– I did, I did. And it was very interesting. Whenever I come across writers whose work I've loved reading since childhood—whether in newspapers or in their books—I make a point of getting in touch, arranging a meeting, going to see them and having a chat. That's just the sort of person I am. I spoke to Ahmet Kabaklı in the same way. He became like an older brother to me too. We'd have a heart-to-heart whenever I was feeling down. At the time, Nejdet Sançar was working at the National Library in Ankara. I, too, was travelling back and forth to Ankara to exchange ideas with Professor Ögel regarding my thesis. On one such trip, I went to the National Library. Naturally, because of my friendship with Atsız, I was reading **Ötüken** and writing for Ötüken at the time. I'd asked Professor Atsız, *'Where does Mr Nejdet work? What does he do? How can I find him?* He'd told me, *'When you go to Ankara, just pop into the National Library.'* So that's what I did; I went to the National Library. They wouldn't let anyone go upstairs; they asked, *'Who have you come to see?' 'I've come to see Professor Nejdet Sançar,' I* said. *'All right, have a seat over there whilst we let him know,'* they said. The person you're visiting comes down to see you. Professor Nejdet came down. When he saw me, I said, *'I'm Gülçin—is that you, Professor Nejdet?'* He started laughing. *'You're just a child, aren't you?'*

he said to me. I must have been about 25 or 26 when *he* told me I looked like a child. *"I've been reading your articles and was expecting a lady of about 40 or 45,"* he said. It was nearly the end of his shift. *"Wait here for me a moment,"* he said. He was wearing an apron. *"I'll just change this and fetch my bag, then I'll be back," he* said. He came back and said, *'Come on, let's go to our place. How could we not meet your wife?' 'You'll have a cup of tea with her,'* he said. *'All right,'* we said, and got up. He took me home. His wife must have been used to it; she welcomed me very warmly, without any hesitation. Whenever we went to Ankara, we started visiting them as well.

– Was there any difference or similarity between Mr Nejdet and Atsız?

– Perhaps I could put it this way: there's no difference when it comes to nationalism. Both were staunch nationalists, solid characters. I'd argue with anyone who said otherwise. There was just one very slight nuance: issues like current politics or a lack of understanding of the Turkic world would really annoy Professor Atsız. When people would talk about this or that, he'd get stressed. Professor Nejdet seemed calmer. *'Let them do whatever they like; we'll carry on as we always have. They can't stop us,'* he'd say. He had a more relaxed demeanour. The only difference was that Professor Nejdet was a bit calmer. But Professor Atsız would get a bit annoyed.

– Do you know the reason behind the issue between Atsız and Türkeş?

– Atsız Hoca may have criticised him, asking why he'd entered politics. I don't think there was anything else to it. I don't think there was a disagreement over nationalism or Turkism. Both were Turkist nationalists. Atsız Hoca didn't much care for politicians. I don't know; I wasn't there to witness it.

– Do you know anything about Atsız Bey being offered a seat in parliament?

– I haven't heard of that, but it's possible. I also received an offer to stand as a Member of Parliament. I was an associate professor at the time. Alparslan Türkeş was Deputy Prime Minister. He called me and asked, *'Would you stand as a parliamentary candidate?'* I replied, *'Oh no, sir, I don't want a seat in Ankara. I wish to continue serving as a soldier.'* Atsız Hoca probably did the same. That's all there is to it.

– It is well known that Mr Atsız would always serve tea to his guests and that he loved tea very much.

– He loved his tea, my dear. Kaniye would make pastries and buns.

We'd drink tea and have a bite to eat.

– There's a story that the stove was often not lit at Atsız Bey's house and that he wrote his works whilst wearing a coat. What do you think about that?

– Every house has its problems. How so? It was a wooden building. It's not easy to heat a place like that. Sometimes on very windy days—back then there were no radiators, just a stove. Even if you lit the stove, if the wind blew in through those cracks and gaps, the house would get cold. It was a three-storey wooden house. No matter what, it didn't heat up very well in winter. It wasn't because he didn't have the money or didn't light the stove; it was simply because the house was a bit old. That, of course, is a matter of circumstances, but I suppose it had nothing to do with wood or coal.

– Apparently, Mr Atsız was working on a history book before he died. It went missing later on. Did he ever mention this book to you?

– As I've travelled abroad quite a lot, if he was doing anything

whilst I was away, then…

I can't say. Buğra knows best. They sorted out his house. They collected his publications. He published them. He knows.

– You're someone who was very close to both Togan and Atsız – what was the relationship between the two of them like? Could you shed some light on this for us?

– Right, right. Look, the professor first read the *Oğuzname* to Atsız. Atsız wrote it in the old script. That's the extent of their closeness… Could it be any better?

– Is there anything else you'd like to say?

– I'd tell young people curious about Atsız to read *Bozkurtlar* first. A young Turk who hasn't read *Bozkurtlar* cannot be a nationalist. I won't accept that. Read *Bozkurtlar* first. Of course, if you want to fully understand Atsız, read all his publications; and if there's anything you're suspicious of or that's on your mind, learn the source language and examine the sources for yourself.

– Thank you for your time.

– You're welcome.

AYDİL EROL

(24 August 2016, Istanbul)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– That's a difficult question for me to answer; nevertheless, I'd like to speak without resorting to the simplicity of boasting or feigning modesty. On my mother's and father's sides, I'm from Kastamonu-Bozkurt. I was born on 25 May 1938 in Çengelköy, Istanbul. In 1951, I was unable to walk for nearly six months after falling off a tram. I left the second year of the Beyoğlu Boys' Secondary Tailoring School. I worked as a knitter for about 20 years.

– When did you start your career in journalism?

– My articles were published in various places, but I effectively began my career as a journalist in 1974 as a columnist for the **[Yeni] İstanbul** newspaper. Sir, I started my career in journalism rather late, just as I married rather late (1983). My wife, Bahar, and I have two sons: Doğuhan (1985) and Batuhan (1986). Between 1975 and 1991, I worked as a proofreader at Tercüman. It was I who first proposed that Dede Efendi's house in Sultanahmet Akbıyık be restored and turned into the Dede Efendi Museum. [40]My articles have appeared in various publications, and some of my poems have been set to music.

40 Every day, signed 'Aydoğdu Ersin', 18 January 1978.

– What would you say about your works?

– "Our Names Through Songs, Poems, Ballads and Historical Examples[41]" (Ankara 1989, 1992; Istanbul 1999, 2010)

It is my first published book and is the most comprehensive work in its field across the Turkic world (the fourth edition contains 17,500 names and places, and is the only work to include the reasons behind the naming of 825 of them; the fifth edition exceeded 20,000). **"Horyatlar[42]"** (Istanbul 1990, 2000) is my second book. **"Mehmet Âkif Ersoy[43]"** (2002), **"Ahmet Hâşim"[44]**(2002), **"Bamteli[45]'** (Interviews – 2005), **"Âşık Veysel Şatıroğlu [46]"** (2007), **"Selections from Ömer Seyfettin [47]"** (2008) and **"Dictionary of the Nutuk [48]" (**2011) were published. In 1998, the fortieth year of my writing career, **"A Tribute to Aydil Erol[49] ",** compiled by Kemal Çapraz, Şerafettin Aybars and Hayri Ataş, was published. **'The Turkish Woman', 'Leaves That Fall Early'** (170 famous people who passed away before the age of 50), **'Against Friend and Foe'** (humour), 'Bamteli-2', and **'A Man of Steel and Spirit: AT-SIZ'** are ready for publication.

In 2002, whilst working as a proofreader and writer for the **Yeniçağ** newspaper, I also served as publishing consultant for **Ufuk** Ötesi. Owing to my work on names, I was invited that same year to participate in the work of the Names Committee of the **Turkish Language** Association.

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41 Aydil Erol, Our Names Through Songs, Poems, Ballads and Historical Examples, Yeni Zamanlar Distribution, 1999.

42 Aydil Erol, *Horyatlar*, Özener Matbaası, 2000.

43 Aydil Erol, *Mehmet Akif Ersoy: Life, Art and Selected Works*, Hikmet Publications, 2002.

44 Aydil Erol, Turkish Classics: Life, Art, and Selected Works / Ahmet Haşim, Hikmet Publications, 2002.

45 Aydil Erol, Bamteli, Ufuk Ötesi Publications, 2005.

46 Aydil Erol, Aşık Veysel Şatıroğlu, IQ Culture and Arts Publishing, 2007.

47 Aydil Erol, Selected Works by Ömer Seyfettin, Kerkük Foundation Publications, 2008.

48 Aydil Erol, Dictionary of the Nutuk, Bilgeoğuz Publications, 2011.

49 Kemal Çapraz, Şerafettin Aybars, Hayri Ataş, A Tribute to Aydil Erol, Kibrit Publications, 1998.

After I included the following quatrain amongst the couplets I published (**Yeniçağ**, February 2003; **Ufuk Ötesi,** April 2003), the phrase **'Karen Fogg's Children'** received widespread coverage in the press:

"They ate the sausages/They put on their coats
They'll sell the country/The children of Karen
Fogg"

– When did you first meet Mr Atsız?

– I believe we met in 1964, at the founding of the Türkçüler Association. We'd had a few telephone conversations before that.

– How did you meet?

– There was a weekly newspaper **called Millî Yol**. It was published by the lawyer İsmet Tümtürk. The Turkish Language Association was about to be established. To become a member, you needed the recommendation of two well-known individuals. I wrote a letter asking, *'What if someone doesn't know anyone?'* and received a positive reply. One Saturday afternoon, they made us place our hands on the flag and the Qur'an and take an oath. The oath was later abolished. Let me tell you this: the man, whether he'd met Atsız once or twice or not at all, speaks in such a way that you'd think he'd never left the Hoca's side. We've heard many legends on this subject. Do you want to hear about those who claim to be extremely close to him despite never having met him, or those who later deny ever having met him? Someone even wrote: *'I suffered greatly for being a "Member of the Atsız Circle", etc.'* May God protect my mind!… Being close to Atsız is a blessing, a privilege, an honour. I have never seen, known, heard of, or come across anyone who attained that closeness and then got into trouble… There is an illness known as 'hallucination, delusion, or psychosis'. As is well known: the patient hears voices that aren't there, smells odours that aren't there, and so on.

– What do you think of Mr Atsız's literary work?

– That question is beyond me. I am a journalist, not a literary historian or critic. Prof. **Dr** Osman F. Sertkaya said the following: *"Even though many years have passed, we have not yet surpassed the Professor's History of Turkish Literature."*

In his 'Open' letter to the Minister of Culture, Talat S. Halman, he also says the following: *'An East Turkestan native who had read the novels* ***[Bozkurtlar]*** *asked me whether I had ever seen Turkestan, remarking, "It seems to have been written by someone who has seen it."'* When we visited Hoca after Adnan Ötüken's funeral, Şekür Turan had also told him the same things.

– Professor, you too write things, after all.

– I'm a journalist who can hold a pen, and hold it properly. Our Professor Dr Ahmet B. Ercilasun says: *"Ruh Adam. His final work. Perhaps his masterpiece. It certainly has its place amongst the top ten novels of our literature."* A few months ago (2016), during our telephone conversation, when he said, *'These days I'm reading Atsız; I live and breathe Atsız,'* I replied, *'May God grant you ease; carry* on'… Whilst writing *__Ruh__ Adam*, Professor Atsız had said, *'If you read it, you'll lose sleep; if you read it, you'll see.'* There are snippets from his own life. For instance, the character Yek in the novel is Oscar Reşer, a German Jew who later adopted the pen name O. Reşat. He is an Orientalist; I saw him at the door of Hafız Yusuf Bey's [Ararat]. (1962)

– Was he really as ugly as the novel made him out to be?

– What's going to happen, Jew!…

– Who was the character 'Güntülü' in that novel in real life? Do you know?

– It's hardly appropriate to pry into people's private lives or act like *a nosy busybody* when it comes to their privacy. There's no doubt that the emotional turmoil, suffering and disappointments of great souls are also immense. With apologies to his soul, let me just say this much: he may have been someone she had a crush on or held in very high regard. (If I may, I'd like to insert a paragraph here: In these days, when one cannot escape the clutches of those who are flirtatious, coquettish, pretentious, and aspiring to be concubines—and who, to top it all, feign piety—those curious about the Turkish view of women should read our Professor Atsız's 'Letters to Adile Ayda', and our Professor Arif Nihat Asya's *Letters of Love*. It is also necessary to remind the so-called feminists—the successors of those who burned hundreds of thousands of women for 'collaborating with the devil'—that Melikshah enacted a 'Women's Rights' law a thousand years ago.

– Were you ever by Atsız Hoca's side whilst he was writing, or after he had finished writing?

– I heard him say, *'I find it difficult to write,'* from his own lips. When I mentioned this to my dear Prof. Dr Suphi Saatçi, he replied, *'That is why it is so easy to read.'* As you know, there are people who have read *Bozkurtlar* 20 or 30 times.

– What are your thoughts on Atsız Bey's character as a historian?

– It's not for me to make an academic assessment. Let me tell you what I experienced. Isn't Faruk Sümer an expert on the Oghuz Turks?

– Yes.

– When he finished the book, he sent it to the Professor. The Professor told us, *'Don't come this week, because I'm going to read *The Oguz*.'* I have no idea how he managed to read it and proofread it in just two days. The acknowledgement to the Professor in that edition was missing from the second edition. The answer Hazret gave to those who asked why is almost unbelievable: *'The publisher wanted it that way!'*

– When you hear the names Atsız Bey and 'Turkish Nationalism', what springs to mind?

– Honesty, bravery, fearlessness come to mind. Nothing else comes to mind. Courtesy, scholarship, respect—these are already there. Let me repeat: Turkism means bravery; it means courage. It means dedicating a seventy-year life to the path of ideals, to the cause of Turkishness, like a fountain that never runs dry. It means expecting no reward, no recognition, no applause. Our professor, Dr Ahmet Bican Ercilasun, says: *"Atsız means valour. Turkish nationalism means valour. Turkish nationalists cannot be fickle... They must not be!"* These are the words of Professor Dr Dursun Yıldırım, a man renowned for his courtesy: *"He never soiled his hands with the filth of this world."* When I told Yılmaz Öztuna that I had been arguing with someone about the Professor, he said: *"What do you think? We've seen plenty of people who wet themselves at the mere mention of Atsız's name."*

– Is there any interesting incident you experienced with Mr Atsız?

– Every one of them is fascinating… The first article of his I read was in *__Büyük__ Doğu*, titled **'The Crusades Against Turkism and What We Have Endured'**; then came the book ***Türk Ülküsü***. I've often wondered, *'How does one speak to a man who takes a dig at everyone?'* That's why the word 'what we have endured' in the title of his article struck me as odd. It turns out that *Adıdeğmez Üstad* [50]had added that word. Then—

50 Necip Fazıl Kısakürek is meant.

I saw that the owner of that sharp pen is, in a word, a paragon of character and a model of courtesy. He smiles and makes others laugh; he is a source of joy and wit. His jokes are often misunderstood for reasons unknown.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention this: Arif Nihat Asya and he have contributed labour and earned rights that cannot be measured by numbers or weighed on scales. If I can repay even a fraction of this debt, I shall consider myself fortunate.

– In fact, the book is usually referred to as *The Crusades Against Turkism*.

– Atsız would not tolerate anyone speaking against Turkishness or Turkism. One day he said, *'Hitler is in our attic.'* To which I replied, *'Professor, if you'd made that joke in '44, a separate investigation would have been opened against you for it.*' I only learnt the truth of the matter later from the book *The **First 65 Years** of **My** Life* by my dear friend Yağmur Atsız. He had told him, *'Hitler is hiding in the loft of our house. Tell only your most trusted friend. Under no circumstances tell anyone else.'* He did as he was told and told only his most trusted friend. A short time had passed. One Sunday morning, a Cadillac pulled up outside the house. Two men in suits got out and, in a very serious and respectful manner, knocked on the door. *'Mr Nihal, we've heard Hitler is in your loft; we've come to look for him.'* I must say, such paranoia and lack of understanding really takes the biscuit!

– From what you observed, what was Mr Atsız like in his daily life?

– There was a man called Ali İhsan who claimed to be a devout believer. Atsız, so to speak, had bought some pide from Hasanpaşa Bakery (on the street below the Faculty of Science) – even on a day of Ramadan – and was walking along the street eating it. Were his eyes binoculars or a telescope?

—the pide was apparently cheese-filled! Such a load of rubbish is rarely seen. How on earth did you work out the pide was cheese-filled, you fool! That's one thing. Secondly, it's simply impossible for Atsız to eat anything on the street! As the late Abdurrahman Çelik used to say: *"A man of Ottoman upbringing. An Istanbul gentleman*." "You should have asked Mr Ali İhsan, the 'Yürük' with the telescopic eyes, who claims to be a 'Yürük': *'Why did you end up in court with Prof. Dr Faruk K. Timurtaş over an Ottoman Turkish textbook, sir?'*

– What was Mr Atsız's relationship with the young people like? How did he treat them?

– I didn't feel bored or put under pressure. We spoke quite comfortably.

– Do you know which foreign languages he spoke?

– One day he said, *'People say I know Arabic because I understand Kâtip Çelebi's *Keşfizzünûn**.' He certainly knew Arabic and Persian.

– Did you attend his funeral?

– Yes. It was crowded. There were also a few people who had come to confess their sins.

– Who were the people who came to confess their sins?

– Who wasn't there, for heaven's sake!… From those who prompted the writing of **'The Weary Ones** [51]' (Ötüken, Issue 6) right through to the American, or whatever he was….

51 Atsız, *Yorulanlar*, *Ötüken* Magazine, 15 June 1964

– What would you like to say about the '44 Case'? Did you ever speak to him?

– Very little. Whenever I saw an engineer friend of ours from the 23rd of 1944, he would recount the events of '44. The total of what the Professor recounted over 12 years regarding the '44 case wouldn't amount to what that friend recounted in a single sitting.

– Did you ever meet Mrs Bedriye?

– I saw her once.

– Did you meet Nejdet Sançar?

– Yes, we did. *"Oh,* look, *two lame men have come together," he* said. We met up a few times in Bostancı. Before that, he'd also come to the Turkish Language Society in Üsküdar. He was a cheerful, good-natured man.

– Was there any resemblance between the two brothers?

– They were both on the same path. But let's not compare them. For instance, Nejdet Hoca's wife, Reşide Hoca Hanım, said*: "Nejdet loved to travel,"* and *"My brother didn't enjoy travelling."*

– Mr Atsız's religious side is much debated…

– No one's faith or worship is anyone else's business. **The Qur'an** says, *'Your religion is yours, and mine is mine.'* [52] Whilst speaking with a few admirers of NFK*, I said, 'For goodness' sake, leave him alone; he's a shaman.*' One of them asked in astonishment, *'What? Is Atsız a shaman?* To which I replied, *'There are no other Muslims in the world apart from these sort. The rest are either shamans, Buddhists or Christians…'*

52 Surah al-Kafirun, verse 6.

There is a gentleman who is held in the highest regard by religious circles, recognised by academics, and who serves as General Secretary of the Turkish Petroleum Foundation: Fethi Gemuhluoğlu**.** They went to visit him at his home in Bostancı. If I recall correctly, Tekin Erer and Refet Körüklü were with him. When they left the house, he remarked, *'The Hoca's religious culture and knowledge left me quite overwhelmed.*' The same Gemuhluoğlu, during the funeral prayer, shouted in response to the imam's question, *'How do you know?', 'This is the first time you've led a man's prayer, and yet you ask: "How do you know?"'*

– What are your thoughts on the issues between Atsız Bey and Türkeş?

– I suppose no one knows anymore; it hasn't been written down anywhere. Albay, on his way back from Europe, was met by Mustafa Kayabek and İsmail Hakkı Gökhun [also known as Şaman] at a certain place; they were there to deliver the Hoca's letter. He stayed at the Divan Hotel in Taksim that night. The one keeping watch at the door until morning was our Cypriot friend, the late İbrahim Cemali, known as *'Gökbörü*'. Let me add one more thing: on his way back to Ankara that morning, he also stopped by the Hoca's house in Maltepe. There were those who passed on rumours in the meantime. It was **the** Hoca and **Ötüken Magazine** who first promoted Türkeş. There were articles about Türkeş in Horyat. A few came from Kirkuk, and I wrote a few myself. The Professor asked: *'Why didn't you sign it?' 'Professor, isn't it better to keep it anonymous?'* The first article about him appeared there. The one against him, however, was in *Akis*, published by the national son-in-law Metin Toker, with a piece titled 'Similarities **Between Hitler and** Türkeş' or something like that. If we disregard that, the first article appeared here. There were rumours circulating back then too. Apparently, they were on bad terms, or so they say. Everyone with a mouth was talking; nothing was left unsaid, not even the embers… The devil's left-hand men managed to drive a wedge between them. Let them light the henna… Later, Türkeş said, *"We have no connection whatsoever with that little magazine*."

– Mr Atsız was said to love his tea.

– Yes, tea with butter.

– How so?

– It's a joke. Apparently, the Kazakh Turks put butter in it or something. He was joking about 'buttery tea'. He'd say*: 'Drink, drink—our ancestors are tea. Eat, eat—our ancestors are biscuits*.' There's a dig at Mr Darwin here, isn't there?

– Yes. They say Mr Atsız used to write books whilst wearing a coat.
Do you have any information on this?

– It's true; unfortunately, it's true… Nobody understood. He didn't have the money to buy firewood or coal. He used to say, *'Our ancestors wore little, burned little, and ate little*.'

– It's said that Mr Atsız was writing a book on Turkish history before he passed away. That work has since gone missing. Do you have any information on this?

– In several places in ***Ruh** Adam*, he says, *'Turkish history will never end, but those who write it will*.' This sentence appears in two *or* three places: *'People keep asking, "When will Turkish history end?" My answer is this: It seems that Turkish history will never end. In any case, there's no way it could end. There is someone who will come to an end: the Turk."* (**Ötüken**, 1969, **p.** 12), (**Unpublished Articles**, p. 317). It seems to have vanished into thin air.

– These days, there's quite a lot of interest in Mr Atsız.

– Let it grow, let it grow… At TÜYAP, the Professor's works have been leading the sales charts for years.

– Have you been able to keep up with the works published about Mr Atsız?

– Among the works published in recent years are Cihan Özdemir's ***At-sız Bey***[53]and ***Once Upon a Time There Was an Atsız***[54], as well as Talât Ülker's ***The Fiery Voice of Hüseyin Nihal Atsız Harşit***[55]. There is also Hayri Yıldırım's ***The Last Turkist***: Atsız* and Serkan Akgöz's *Atsız **in the Press***. There are also ***Unpublished Articles***[56]and the like. Even if a foundation bearing his name were established, an institute set up, a novel written or films made, it would still be too little. A place in Kavacık was once called Atsız Forest. I live in Beylikdüzü. It became a district a few years ago. They have named a street after him.

– What do you think of Safiye Erol? [57]

– She is one of the writers I greatly admired. Back when her collected works were first being published, I took it out on my dear friend Mehmet Nuri Yardım: *'You're publishing my mother's books and I haven't even been told…'* This joke must have spread quite widely, because Professor Gürbüz Yılmaz rang me one day and asked: *'Does your mother have any memories of Prof. Dr Mehmet Çavuşoğlu [her elder brother]?' 'Goodness, Professor,'* I said, *'my dear mother couldn't read or write—how on earth would she have known Çavuşoğlu!'* The matter was simply a case of similar first and last names…

Whilst we're on the subject, let's touch on a point known to very few: In his 'open reply' to the 'official' letter from the Minister of Culture, Talat S. Haldan, in 1971, the Professor also states the following: *'Safiye Erol's novel *Ciğerdelen* also falls short of genius*

53 Cihan Özdemir, Atsız Bey, Ötüken Publications, 2007

54 There are two books with the same title: İlhan Bahar, Once Upon a Time There Was an Atsız, Kamer Publications, 2015. Collective, Once Upon a Time There Was an Atsız, Siyah Beyaz Publications, 2013.

55 Talat Ülker, Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, The Fierce Voice of Harşit, Bilgeoğuz Publications, 2015.

56 Collective, *Atsız's Unpublished Articles*, Togan Publications, 2012.

57 As some biographies of Aydil Erol describe him as the son of the writer Safiye Erol, I felt the need to ask this question.

'It is a very powerful work that stands out, but it has been lost amidst the flood of disgraceful left-wing works. It is also one of the finest works for cinema.' (**Ötüken,** 1 November, Issue 12), **Atsız's Unpublished Articles,** Istanbul 2012, Togan Publications, pp. 351–369.

– **Is there anything else you'd like to say?**

– With each passing day, his worth—like that of Atatürk—is becoming better understood. We failed to recognise his worth; myself included. Hopefully, we will recognise it from now on. I believe those who come after us will understand *it* better. How could one not agree with dear Yağmur Atsız: *'Had certain insolent individuals not wasted his time, he would have produced even more works…'*

One of the rare individuals nurtured by Turkish culture… Yılmaz Öztuna lists the Turkish geniuses, and Nihal Atsız is one of them. Baskın Oran says, "**Bozkurtlar* is a literary masterpiece that leaves the reader under a tremendous spell.*"

– **Thank you.**

– It is I who should thank you.

MUHİDDİN NALBANTOŠLU

(25 August 2016, Istanbul)

– How did you come to know Mr Atsız?

– I worked at the old publishing houses in Babıâli from 1945 to 1959. That's where I met Mr Atsız, back in the 1950s. That is, shortly after the famous trial of 1944 had concluded. There was a publishing house called Türkiye Yayınevi. I worked with Tahsin Demiray. I was still a child. Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, we founded the Fikir Edebiyat Society together. Before my time, Türkiye Publishing House had published several magazines. One of these was *Ateş*. They also published ***Ateş*** for young people. I didn't get to read the children's edition of *Ateş*. I always read *Türkiye Yayınevi*. Atsız Bey's ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*** first appeared there. So it must have been published around 1931. The magazine ran for about 40–45 issues. In the 1940s, ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*** was left unfinished. So the court case must have begun during that period. It was left unfinished. There was a small note saying, *'Don't worry, the Grey Wolves will* **rise** *again.*' I waited for it for years. Around 1948, I saw that the book ***The Grey Wolves Rise Again*** had been published. I read it; it was a masterpiece. Reha Oğuz Türkkan published a newspaper called ***Yıllar Boyu Tarih*** (**History Through the Years**), and there's an article in it about historical novels. In it, regarding this *work*, he says: *'This work is a great masterpiece. Had it focused solely on the inner worlds of its heroes, that book would have become a classic.'* And indeed, it did become a classic. The two were at odds, but they made peace towards the end of their lives. Our youth was theirs

spent reading their articles accusing one another. One would write to him under the title **'The Pain of the Tail'** [58], the other would reply with **'We Are Giving an Account'** [(59)]. There was another friend. He was tall and lived in Antalya: Sadi Özbek. I knew him too. He was a man as strong as a lion. Whilst Atsız was still alive, I obtained his autobiography, written in his own hand. There is an article by him at the beginning of the *__Atsız__ Tribute*. He wrote his autobiography in his own hand, stating it was from the Muhiddin Nalbantoğlu Archive. It was 29 pages long, dating from the 1960s. They've included it in five or six books. They've included it in the book on **Nihal Atsız** published by Ötüken, and in Osman Fikri Sertkaya's book as well. He used to come to see me twice a week. I had a shop in Babıâli. For over twenty years, he would come twice a week. The Süleymaniye Library was nearby; he'd come straight from there. We'd chat for an hour. From there, he'd board the ferry and cross over. One day, I couldn't even offer him a cup of tea. He wouldn't eat or drink anything on the street. He wouldn't eat on the go, nor would he eat a simit. That's the sort of man he was. He had very strong principles. I suppose he was afraid of being poisoned. They say Atatürk used to take his raki with him wherever he went to avoid being poisoned. There were 11 assassination attempts on him. He had a leather bag. He'd been carrying that bag since his student days—for 50 years. The bag was worn out, but he still carried it.

– What did you talk about during those conversations?

– We used to talk about everything. The events of the day, matters concerning statesmen… For example, when the 27 May coup took place, he was by my side. It was the day after the coup. In fact, they came and picked me up an hour after he'd left. I was in the youth wing of the Democratic Party. I asked him, *'Sir, what's going on? Where are we going?'* Everyone said, 'The state is finished, the nation is finished, the country is finished'

58 Reha Oğuz Türkkan, *Kuyruk Acısı*, Bozkurtçu Yayınları, 1943.

59 Reha Oğuz Türkkan, Atsız's response, 'This Is How Accounts Are Settled', to the first published article 'We Are Giving an Account' in Gökbörü

Magazine, written under the pseudonym Cihan Savaş Fer. 1943

He was in high spirits. *"No,"* he said, *"Turkey has come to the brink of the abyss forty times, a thousand times, and has survived. The Turkish nation is resilient. The Turkish nation will overcome this too."* He said, *"What calamities we have endured."* He believed in Mustafa Kemal's genius. He loved Atatürk. Nobody knows that side of him. The strange thing is, he even wrote about it in his own book. When speaking of 1944, he says, *'We loved Ismet Pasha.' 'But he oppressed us during the events of 1944…'* he says. He says we loved him for this: *'Ismet Pasha had a family life.'* Let me tell you something that nobody is aware of; there is that speech of 19 May 1944, the one that condemned the Turkists to trials – that speech had the effect of a cold shower on the entire nationalist community. Everyone criticised Ismet Pasha. They did not forgive Ismet Pasha's speech. Because it was not a speech that could be forgiven. However, in 1952–53, I was working at the İnkılâp Bookshop. We published Hasan Ali Yücel's books. He used to come and go there. I was very young at the time, in my early twenties. One day I asked him, *'How did Ismet Pasha deliver that speech?' 'Ismet Bey deeply regretted having given that speech,'* he said. Another example: as you know, the speeches and addresses given by heads of state since the 1940s have begun to be published. Take Atatürk, for example: ***Atatürk's Speeches and Statements*** is a six-volume set. İnönü's speeches had also been published. I came across a copy of one of these. It was signed by Hasan Ali Yücel, and there was a letter inside. He hadn't included the 44th speech in the book. I asked Hasan Ali Yücel about it*: 'The 44th speech isn't in the book,'* I said. When the book was being prepared, whilst it was still in typeset form, he had taken it and given it to İsmet Pasha himself. He looked through it and examined it. Ten days later, he sent it back. He had removed the 44th speech and discarded it.

– So İsmet Pasha removed them himself?

– İsmet Pasha didn't include it. But it appears in many places. You can't erase those words. There's a saying by Confucius*: 'Think three times before you speak, and a hundred times before you write.'* From this conversation

everyone came to hate it. He was in the Presidential box, delivering this speech, and there were statesmen and intellectuals present. For example, Sadri Maksudi Arsal and his daughter, Adile Hanım. They were quite astonished at the way he delivered this speech.

– Adile Ayla and Atsız were already exchanging quite a few letters.

– Adile Ayla was a lady who wrote the most beautiful pieces about Mr Atsız. I knew her personally.

– Which of those on trial in the '44 Case' did you meet?

– I know them all.

– What did you discuss?

– Now, most of them got involved in this business by chance, by coincidence. They had nothing to do with it. There were men I met quite often. For example, Reha Oğuz Türkkan was one of them. Sadi Özbek, and there was a lawyer—I can't remember his name. They all used to come to Babıâli. We'd always run into famous people. One day, shortly after the 1960 coup, Mr Atsız said to me, *'If we'd wanted to, we could have staged a coup*.' He'd seen how easy it was to carry out a government coup. So there were many officers who admired and read Mr Atsız's work.

– He was from a military background himself, after all.

– Those who carried out the 27 May Coup weren't the typical coup-plotters either. They weren't militants. Take Dündar Taşer, for example; he was a man like a dervish. That's why they say he was the man who mentored Türkeş.

– Who were among those imprisoned in the 'coffin cells' during the 44th Trial? Do you have any information on this?

– Reha Oğuz Türkkan suffered a great deal of oppression. They didn't leave a single accusation against him untried. There were lawyer İsmet Tümtürk and Sadi Özbek. They were all as brave as lions, and tall. There was a traffic department director who had been detained during the 1960 coup, Celal Kosova; he'd been arrested as a writer and said to *me*: *'You'll be released from here – will you meet with Türkeş?' 'Yes,'* I said. *'Give him my regards; Zeki Sofuoğlu and I organised the Ankara demonstrations in '44,' he* said. '*There were coffin cells back then too,'* he added. *'They're persecuting us at the Şale Mansion as well,' he* said. They rounded up all the Turkish nationalists. When they were told to shoot, they killed them. They threw them all into the coffin cells and subjected them to persecution. We published one of Türkeş's books. I titled it *The **1944 Nationalist Incident** [60]*. I gave the book its title. I prepared the book for publication. In it, he also recounted those who were sent to the coffin cells; Türkeş mentioned the name of the poet Cemal Oğuz Öcal here. I know Cemal Oğuz Öcal too. He couldn't rise through the ranks; he couldn't be promoted. Because he had been sent to the 'coffin cell'. Türkeş said*, 'I didn't go to the coffin cell, but all my other friends did. They were subjected to oppression.*'* When Sadi Irmak was Prime Minister, there was a man close to him. Mr Sadi had given a document from the state archives to one of our friends. He was one of the poets of the War of Independence. He published a newspaper called **Doğu**. He showed it to me. A red document with three crescents… Sent from the Prime Minister's Office in Ankara to the Istanbul Police Headquarters; the police chief wasn't letting it be known outside*,* but it contained phrases like*: 'Crush them, make them regret being born…'* It was a directive issued by İnönü. There's one thing: when these men were sentenced—some to ten years, some to twenty years, and so on—they appealed to the military court. The verdict will be overturned. They were talking amongst themselves—Atsız, Türkeş and the like. *'The President of the Court of Cassation: one is a Kurd, the other a Circassian. These are Turks*

60 Alparslan Türkeş, The 1944 Nationalist Incident, Kutluğ Publications 1968,

"'Not *at all.'* General İsmail Berkok—whom they called a Circassian—Türkeş told me this: *'Then we learnt that he had nothing to do with being Circassian. So we were left with the Turk, and it turned out the Turk was no different from a Circassian,' he* said. The other one, Ali Fuat Erden Pasha, wasn't Kurdish or anything like that either. I knew him too. I asked him myself. He said: *'When these Turanists and Turkists came before us, we saw that they were Turkists and Turanists who loved their homeland and their nation… Men ahead of their time, men who wrote to secure the Turks' independence. Men who dreamt of this. How could we declare them guilty? How could we put them on trial? 'We also spoke with İsmail Berkok, and we had them all acquitted,' he* said. But İsmet Pasha's classmates—this Erden Pasha… *'After that, İsmet Pasha stopped even exchanging greetings with me,' he* said. He harboured a grudge over this. Why had he released them? After all, it was İsmet Pasha who had originally had them convicted.

– In Hayri Yıldırım's work, *The Racism and Turanism Trial of 3 May 1944*, it is also recounted that after this acquittal, when İsmet Pasha encountered Chief of the General Staff Kazım Orbay, he refused to greet him and behaved coldly.

– Yes, he didn't speak. When they convicted them, Moscow didn't believe in this 'society' business or whatever. At the time, one of the commanders who tried them was Ali Rıza Artunkal. He was also a relative of Hilmi Ziya Ülken. One day, Ülken pointed at me and teased, *'Look, this one's a Turanist too, one of those you've tried…'* and so on. I was 16 at the time. I'm 83 now, but my memory is very sharp. I remember everything. At the time, Ali Rıza Artunkal said, *'Do you know, Mr Ziya, when these people were arrested, the documents were placed before me, and I saw that there was a second lieutenant amongst them. Alparslan Türkeş. 'How on earth did he end up among them—a man who assigns staff officer posts?' I called the police officers and said, 'Search this man's house.'*

'Take even the smallest scrap of paper.' 'We've arrested this man,' they said. *'We searched his house and brought everything we found,'* they said. They brought five or six sacks of books. *'We looked through the books; there was Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Atatürk's *Nutuk*. He'd read them all and taken notes."* You see, Babıâli was such a place that it was like a university; Yahya Kemal used to say, *'Anyone who works here for a year is as good as having graduated from university*.' There was Hilmi Yücebaş. I told him this. He said, *'I was the one who arrested him. We took his books; *Nutuk* caught my eye, so I took it."*

– So he'd got his hands on the book?

– Yes. It was written in the old script; he'd underlined passages and made notes. One day, we were talking with the late Türkeş; *'I was genuinely surprised by the books taken from my home, Commander. For a lieutenant to have read so many books—it's impossible. You must have gone to the wrong place. Did you go to the bookshop?" "No, Pasha, we searched the first lieutenant's house as you ordered. We brought them from there,"* they replied. Ali Rıza Artunkal says, *'I called Türkeş. "Son, are these books yours?" I asked.' "Yes, Pasha." "How can you get involved with the Turanists? It's a harmful organisation… You're a staff officer,"* he said. *"Pasha, Atatürk says, 'Today, outside the Turkish nation, there is a great Turkish community. From now on, we shall take care of it.' 'What are you on about? The Republic has been established. We're living in the 21st century,'* he said. Türkeş replied, *'Paşa*, *history will prove us right.' 'All right, all right, take this away,' I said. 'He was going to make me a Turkic nationalist too,'* said Artunkal Paşa.

We met with Hilmi Yücebaş, and I said, *'Paşa*, *would you give me that Nutuk*?' *'All right*,*'* he said. He brought *it* and gave it to me. I took it to Türkeş and presented it to him as a gift. He was so delighted that he asked, *'How did you get hold of it?' 'Hilmi Yücebaş, who collects books, had acquired it*,*' I* said. He was overjoyed.

– What would you like to say about the rift between Atsız and Reha Oğuz Türkkan?

– Let me tell you this: as I knew both of them well, it was simply that they couldn't stand each other. First, Türkkan pledged allegiance to Atsız. A man who recognised him as a mentor… Then he went and entered into an ideological rivalry with Atsız. A tug-of-war over who was the leader. It's like jealousy. But of course, Atsız is a great historian and a great literary figure—that's a fact… Atsız would often *say, 'Everyone thinks I'm a historian.'* He has some wonderful history books. He has views that shape the course of history. Yılmaz Öztuna is also an admirer of Atsız's historical perspective. But he would say*, 'I am a literary scholar*.' At Darülfünun (the Faculty of Literature), he was Fuat Köprülü's assistant. Köprülü was a difficult man to get on with. Atsız had a friend at the faculty, Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, who is a literary historian. One day, Atsız said to me: *"Fuat Köprülü didn't give those around him much of a chance. Take Fevziye Abdullah, for example; he didn't help her. He sent them all to secondary schools and grammar schools. He didn't give them any opportunity for advancement. He didn't make her a professor."* I told this to Mrs Fevziye. *"Did Nihal say that*?" she asked. *'Fuat Bey told me, "My girl, what are you doing amongst all those men? Amongst the professors? The place where you can work comfortably and produce your work is a secondary school*." *He sent me to teach at a secondary school,'* she said. *'Nihal Bey was mistaken*,' she added. Fevziye Hanım told me this herself. One day, we were talking with Nihat Sami Banarlı. Atsız was still alive at the time. I said, *'You've taken a book from Atsız; he wants it back.'* He told me, *'Nihal*, *Atsız's inflammatory outbursts are damaging to Turkish nationalism.'* He was a great man; he was referring to those open letters of his.

– Did Atsız and Reha Oğuz make up later?

– Of course, of course they made up. Time heals all wounds. He never spoke ill of Atsız. Nor did Atsız speak ill of him. Reha Oğuz Türkkan had a book:

An Introduction to Turkism [61]**.** It was a better, more perfect book than Ziya Gökalp's *The Principles of **Turkism***. A 300-page book. I had a copy of that book myself. When that work was published, Reha Oğuz wasn't even 30 years old. None of the books written on the same subject afterwards could match it. When I mentioned this to Atsız, he said, *'It ran dry before it was full.'*

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's literary work?

– First of all, there's this: he is one of those who use Turkish best. There are those who are deeply devoted to the Turkish language. He is one of them. You will not find a single spelling mistake or grammatical error in any of Atsız's books or writings. There are five such people: Nihat Sami Banarlı, our own Nihal Atsız, Yakup Kadri, Eşref Ruşen Ünaydın and Yahya Kemal. These are the men who use the Turkish language most skilfully.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's role as a historian?

– Mr Atsız used to say, *'I am not a historian, I am a man of letters*,' but his writings on history are very important. ***Issues in Turkish** History** [62]charted the course for Yılmaz Öztuna; no such book has been written in Turkey.

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's approach to Turkism?

– Atsız Bey's Turkism is a cultural Turkism. It is not about taking up arms and marching. Will the Turks achieve their independence? They have seen his visions. He even mapped out the path for us

61 Reha Oğuz Türkkan, An Introduction to Turkism, Berikan Publications, 2000

62 Atsız, Issues in Turkish History, Ötüken Publications, 12th edition, 2015.

'Will we see it?' they asked. But a few years after Mr Atsız's death, the Russians collapsed. I wrote about this in my book. I had a book called ***The Epic of the Turkmen***. I said, 'It won't take 20 years for them to gain their independence.' It didn't take 20 years; Russia collapsed in 1990. Because communism is a regime contrary to human nature…

– Is there an interesting anecdote you have about your time with Mr Atsız?

– I was one of those who frequently visited Atsız Bey's home. He, too, would often come and go to see me. He was a modest man who lived on his own. He made his own tea and coffee; there was a girl he'd taken in as his own, Kaniye. He even named her son himself. He was a blue-eyed boy.

– He named him Hakan.

– He must be about 50 now. The girl's husband was a carpenter too.

– Did they live at Mr Atsız's house?

– No, no. He'd come over to cook their meals and so on, then leave. He probably lived nearby. Kaniye stood by Atsız Bey and supported him. Look, let me tell you something else: there were young people who never left Atsız Bey's side. For example, there were four brothers. The sons of an officer… Have a chat with them; it'll be very good. They're the ones closest to Atsız Bey. They'll help move the library.

– The Saruhanoğlu brothers?

– Yes. Nezih Saruhanoğlu, Erdoğan Saruhanoğlu, Gün-doğdu Saruhanoğlu, Güneri Saruhanoğlu. These lads were there for Atsız through thick and thin. They even helped move his house. They were there for him in everything.

They published their magazines by chipping in money**.** These lads financed the **Ötüken** Magazine. They kept that magazine going for over ten years. There was also Mustafa Kayabek, who was the editor-in-chief of the magazine. He passed away last year. I wish he were still alive so you could have met him too. We're about the same age as him. Atsız's own children didn't do for him what these young men did. They're still alive. You can meet with these young men.

– I'll get in touch.

– They ran publishing houses. They published my books too. They were the first to publish Atsız's collection and complete works. They took ***Atsız Mecmua** [63]* from me—it's about 17 issues. They included those articles. He also compiled all the articles analysing Atsız Bey; speak to Osman Fikri Sertkaya about him as well.

– I'll speak to him as well.

– That's good; do have a chat.

– In your view, what were Atsız Bey's distinctive qualities?

– Mr Atsız was a man who was different in every way. European Turkologists used to say of Ahmet Vefik Pasha: 'Even if *you dressed him in a beggar's robe and sent him out among the people, this man is a statesman*.' Atsız was just like that. He was a solitary figure amidst the crowds. When walking down the street, he was always deep in thought, always in a state of contemplation. One day, something strange happened. We were talking in my shop. It was around 9 o'clock in the evening; Oktay Aslanapa was there, Atsız was there, Atsız's brother Nejdet Sançar was there, and Cemal Oğuz Öcal and others were there. It was past 9 o'clock. Atsız, Oğuz Aslanapa and the others left. Those who had come to the shop stayed behind. Literature students were coming in. A few of them went on to become professors; among them was

63 The Atsız Journal published 17 issues between 15 May 1931 and 5 October 1932.

I'm not sure. After they'd left, the young people asked, *'Brother, who were those people?'* and so on. I'd assumed the lads recognised them. I said, 'That's *Oktay Aslanapa, and the other one is Nihal Atsız*.' They replied, *'Oh, was that him? Why didn't you say so?'* and ran off after him. Down below, the lads had caught up with Professor Atsız. *"Professor, we didn't recognise you. You're Nihal Atsız, aren't you? Let's cross over together. We live in Kadıköy too*,' and so on. They got on the ferry and crossed over. They took Atsız all the way to his home, saying, 'Let's talk a bit more, let's have a bit more of a chat.' After that, these young men surrounded him. One of them was Nezih Saruhanoğlu.

– What was Mr Atsız's home life like?

– He separated from his first wife. She was also a literature teacher: Mehpare Tevfik.[64]She had written a short work herself; a book titled **The Evolution of the Family Among the Turks and the Role of Women in This**.[65]Atsız's second wife, Bedriye Hanım, was a school friend of Mehpare Hanım. They used to visit each other. Bedriye Hanım also has a poem in the ***Atsız** Mecmua*. It is a poem that begins, *'That brave man called Atsız…'* and so on. She declared her love for Atsız. There, she openly declared her love for a married man. She then broke up the marriage. Atsız separated from his wife and married her. His two sons are by Bedriye Atsız. Atsız's family life was very unhappy. His children all betrayed him. They abandoned him. His younger son was with him. The two of them used to come and go together around 1954–55. Then that child went to live with his mother as well. The woman treated the children badly too. But this is what happened: the children were well brought up in Germany.

64 We do not have much information regarding Mrs Mehpare. Nor is Mrs Mehpare mentioned very often in works about Atsız's life. For further details, see: Kağan Bahadır Küçükalcan, 'Who Was Atsız Bey's First Wife, Mrs Mehpare?' http://www.yazarport.com/yazi/25206/atsiz-bey-in-ilk-esi-mehpare-hanim-kimdir

65 Mehpare Tefvik, The Evolution of Family Life in Turkish History and the Role of Women, Hüsnütabiat Press, 1936.

For example, when they arrested Atsız, what a lack of mercy, what brutality – they left that child, who was only four or five years old, and just walked away. The child was crying and so on; the neighbours came, opened the door and rescued him. Otherwise, he would have died. His wife took their eldest son and went to Germany. I saw his eldest son once or twice at Atsız's house. He was a tall, strapping man. Later on, we had a falling-out with him too. About 10–15 years ago, I wrote an article in *Ye-niçağ* urging him to read his father's books. He was saying things that contradicted his father's books. He hadn't read his father's book; he knew nothing about his father. I told him, 'Read your father's books properly; study them thoroughly.' We had a row. His younger son knows me well.

– Did he reply to your article?

– I don't know; I haven't looked. Our Turkish youths don't know their fathers. Mehmet Akif's wife, for instance, never told her children, 'Your father was a great man.' There's a poem by Fikret, isn't there:

You have surged like such a mighty river, Yet,
alas, you have flowed away across barren land!
You needed a different ground, a different time; You
needed a sign from the divine realm.

That's exactly how it was with Atsız… He always flowed through barren land. We cannot say that this nation benefited from Nihal Atsız. Atsız is only now being understood. He is being understood 40 years after his death. Mehmet Akif and Yahya Kemal were only understood 50 years after their deaths. All great men are like that. People aren't even aware of them whilst they're alive.

I never went to Atsız's house on my own. We usually went with Muammer Özergin. He lived quite close to him too. He was the man he saw most often. We would chat. It was his wife's

house… He divorced her a month before his death. His solicitor was also a friend of mine.

Enver Yakupoğlu. They were told he wouldn't use the surname Atsız, but the woman used it anyway.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's dialogue with young people?

– Look, let me tell you something very interesting. There was a much-loved son of Izmir. When I met him, he was 20 years old. He was a student at Istanbul Technical University. His name was Yaşar Aksoy. One day, Yaşar Aksoy went to Atsız's house with 8–10 young people. They all asked questions. This one didn't ask a question. Atsız mistook this lad for a policeman. He was the last one left as everyone else was leaving. Mr Atsız spoke harshly*: 'Who are you? What are you? You didn't even ask a single question.' 'Sir,'* he said, *'I've brought you greetings from my mother.' 'Who is your mother?'* he asked. *'You call her Üzüm Zehra,'* he said. *'I'm the son of Zehra from İzmir,' he* said. *'Come here then…' he* said. It must have been a winter's day; he'd put some wood on the stove. He chatted with the lad. At first, he'd thought he was a policeman because he hadn't asked any questions. Atsız was always wary of people coming and going… There was a book called ***My World Among Books** [66]*, in which Yaşar Aksoy recounts this incident.

– Which foreign languages was Mr Atsız proficient in?

– His Persian was excellent. In his book ***Turkish Literature***, Nihat Sami used to say, *"The man who reads the Orkhon Inscriptions best is Nihal Atsız*." I included a sentence from the Orkhon Inscriptions on both sides of my book, published in the 1970s. "O Turkish Oğuz chieftains, heed this. As long as the sky above does not collapse, and the earth below does not split open, who can disrupt your state and its traditions?" I wrote the original in handwriting and its Turkish translation. I took it from Atsız. I found it, had it translated, and included it in my book. Atsız translated it. In the introduction to Atatürk's *Nutuk*, he had highlighted that passage,

66 Yaşar Aksoy, *My Life*, Konak Municipality Cultural Publications, 2011.

in the Orhun Inscriptions presented to him as a gift. *'The Great Speech shall be addressed as follows*,' he wrote. *'By force and deceit, every fortress of the sacred homeland may have been captured, every shipyard entered, every army dispersed, and every corner of the country may have been effectively occupied.'* He took this from the Orhun Inscriptions—that is, from Atsız's translation.

– Did you attend Atsız Bey's funeral?

– Of course, my dear. One end was at the Osman Ağa Mosque, the other at Karacaahmet Cemetery. I attend the annual commemorative ceremonies. There was only one I couldn't attend. The Sa-ruhanoğlu brothers were organising it.

– What happened at the funeral?

– The Hoca's body lay on the prayer stone. When the imam said, *'In the name of a true man…'*, Fethi Gemuhluoğlu—who was the director of the Petroleum Foundation—exclaimed, *'This prayer stone has never seen such a true man since it became a prayer stone…'* He shouted it out loud. His sons were there too. His sons had flown in from Germany to attend their father's funeral. As his sons walked ahead of us, Fethi Gemuhluoğlu said, *'If these men were real men, their father would still be alive today.'* The undersecretaries, the Bilgiç brothers, had already been tried alongside Sait Bilgiç in the 'Case of 44'. The whole of Turkey was there. MPs, ministers – everyone was there. The bereaved family were lost in the crowd. All the young people from Istanbul were there. We carried the coffin, draped in the flag, all the way to the cemetery. Everyone stood to salute along the way.

– Have you met Mrs Bedriye?

– We met her like this: there used to be Turkish Studies Congresses, which aren't held anymore. They were held until about ten years ago. That

would always come to the congresses from Germany. That's where we met. But her sons weren't with her. She'd attend on her own and then go back. She's a great scholar too.

– Did you talk about Mr Atsız?

– No, I wouldn't talk to her – what would I have to say to a woman with whom Atsız Bey died on bad terms?

– Did you meet Nejdet Sançar?

– Of course, dear. Nejdet Sançar was a civil servant at the National Library in Ankara. We'd go to Ankara to talk to him. We used to publish a magazine. He became the face of the MHP. We published a magazine called **Milli Hareket**. We'd go to Ankara to collect Nejdet Sançar's articles. He was a very pleasant man. He was more gentle than Nihal Atsız. He was a more tolerant man. He wasn't as strict as Atsız. I was very fond of both of them. We met Nejdet Sançar's wife, Reşide Sançar. Reşide Sançar used to come and go to the publishing house right up until her death. We also published Nejdet Sançar's books at our publishing house. We published *__Heroes of Our__ Race* [67]and *__Essays on Turkism__*[68]. However, he was a very unfortunate man; most of Nejdet Sançar's writings were never published. Huge volumes, very valuable writings. God willing, someone will collect and publish them.

– Atsız Bey's religious views are much debated; what are your thoughts on this matter?

– The thing is, we used to discuss these matters with him. For example, he went and wrote some unnecessary things in his articles in *Ötüken*. 'You're not a religious scholar, after all.' There, he doesn't mention the Prophet Muhammad,

67 Nejdet Sançar, Heroes of Our Race, Aylı Kurt Publications, 1943.

68 Nejdet Sançar, Essays on Turkish Nationalism, Kamer Publications, 1976.

"The principles established by Muhammad are called the Qur'an," he says. This implies that the Qur'an is not a divine book. This is evident in his articles. He used to refer to the Prophet as 'the Arab Muhammad'. I said, *'Professor, one does not write such things.' 'Isn't Muhammad an Arab?'* he asked. *'Look,'* I said, *'there is a hadith of the Prophet which says: "When my name is mentioned, send blessings upon me."'*

– What was his response to what you said?

– He fell silent. One must show respect for the Prophet of Islam… whether you believe or not. He used to say, *'It is the religion of my people; I respect it.'* But let me also say this: Atsız's entire way of life was also based on Islam. For example, he was a very honest man. He detested liars. In none of his writings would he pass judgement on a man without just cause. He might have been mistaken at times. He had given their due to all those who had wronged others.

– What are your thoughts on the dispute between Mr Atsız and Mr Türkeş?

– There have been some unpleasant incidents between them in recent days. But one of the heroes in ***Ruh Adam*** is Türkeş.

– Which one?

– The character of Captain Şeref… The young people drove a wedge between them. Atsız has no intention of becoming a political leader. Türkeş was, in fact, his protégé. Their relationship had not been good in recent years; the young people were spreading rumours. Türkeş always showed respect towards Atsız. Türkeş encouraged the young people: *'For goodness' sake, remember him; don't miss the events of 3 May.'*

– You said you were a member of the Democratic Party.

– I was in the youth wing.

– What was Mr Atsız's view of Adnan Menderes?

– During the Menderes era, all the men from '44 were elevated to the status of saints. They were all made undersecretaries – Emin Bilgiç, Sait Bilgiç and so on. Menderes pardoned them all and gave them posts.

– What are your thoughts on the closure of the Turkish Nationalists' Association by the Democratic Party?

– Look, there's a historical incident. I was speaking with Prof. Nevzat Yalçıntaş at the Aydınlar Ocağı. He said, *'We'll bring Celal Bayar here and have him speak.'* Of course, this incident I'm referring to took place during the period when Bayar had been spared execution. *'I won't come,'* I said. *'Why?'* he asked. *'If I come, I'll ask questions. I'll cause a stir.* I'll ask *why you closed the Nationalists' Association…*' After that meeting ended, Yalçıntaş told me, *'Someone else asked the question you didn't ask. They asked, "Why did you close the Turkish Nationalists' Association?"' 'What did he reply?'* I asked. Bayar had said it was a mistake. *'How can that be? The whole nation suffers the consequences of the mistakes made by statesmen,'* I said. He closed down 850 of our branches. When 27 May came, they couldn't find a single nationalist by their side. I was the only one there. I was arrested. I said, *'Look, you've closed down our association; there's only one person standing by your side. Otherwise, the whole country would be on your side.' 'We made a mistake,'* said Tevfik İleri.[69]

69 Tevfik İleri; Former Minister of National Education 11 August 1950–5 April 1953, 13 April 1957–
25 November 1957, 23 May 1959–8 December 1959 (Acting)

– What did Atsız think of Menderes?

– Atsız wanted Menderes to cooperate with all nationalists. They, too, were reluctant to engage in close dialogue with the nationalists. But he gave jobs to those tried in '44. He reinstated them to their posts. Menderes, for example, reinstated Türkeş to the military. He was also one of the leaders of the 27 May coup. He granted amnesty to all of them. Fethi Tevetoğlu was also a soldier. He granted him amnesty too. Oh, if only you'd had the chance to speak to him as well. He was very close to Atsız. He would even sign his books *to Atsız* as *'Comrade'*. He was a good poet. He wrote heroic poems and the like.

– Have you ever heard that Mr Atsız was offered a seat in parliament?

– No. Atsız wouldn't have wanted it. He had no interest in politics. His sole aim was to write a few poems and a novel in his nation's language. That was his entire cause.

– What was Mr Atsız's financial situation like?

– He was always struggling financially. He worked as a clerk in a library. He was on a low salary. He'd come to me, cut out articles from newspapers and books. He'd ask for them. I'd find them for him. I'd sell them to him at a low price. I'd sell them for the price I'd paid. Nobody knows that Nihal Atsız also wrote secondary school textbooks. Together with Bedriye Atsız. History textbooks for secondary schools. Those books were taught in secondary schools for a few terms.

– It is said that, because his home was cold, he wrote his novels whilst wearing a coat.

– I never saw him in a coat. He always came in a suit.

– Mr Atsız has a lost book. Do you have any information on that?

– That's a myth. There's no such book. Those are just rumours.

– What do you think of the books published about Mr Atsız?

– There's only one among them—a book published by Ötüken Publishing. It came out recently. The others aren't systematic. Gümüşhane Municipality published a book by a friend of ours; it's a rather weak book. Togan Publications brought out a thick book, but that's a poor one too. Osman Fikri Sertkaya's book is slim and good. All the books have quoted from my archive.

– Is there anything else you'd like to say?

– People have rediscovered Atsız. *__Issues in Turkish__ History* should be a handbook for Turkish youth. Likewise, *__Essays__* contains his finest writings. Young people should read them.

– Thank you for taking the time to speak with me.

– You're welcome.

PROF. DR. OSMAN FİKRİ SERTKAYA

(25 August 2016, Istanbul)

PROF. DR. OSMAN FİKRİ SERTKAYA [70]

Osman Fikri Sertkaya, born on 11 August 1946 in Adana, completed his primary, secondary and sixth-form education in Adana.

He began his university studies in 1964 at the Department of Turkish Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Istanbul University. In 1968, he graduated from the Department of Turkish Language and Literature, Chair of Old Turkish Language, with his undergraduate thesis entitled **'Mi'rācnāme (Text-Index)**', which focused on the Chagatai Turkish language.

In January 1970, he began working as an assistant to Prof. Dr Muharrem Ergin at the Chair of Old Turkish Language within the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at the Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University.

In January 1976, he defended his doctoral thesis entitled **"Sirācü'l-ḳulūb: Works in the Uyghur Script from the Islamic Period (Transcription and Index)**" and was awarded the title of "Doctor"; in June 1982, he was awarded the title of "Assistant Professor".

In October 1989, Osman Fikri Sertkaya was awarded the title of "Associate Professor" after defending his thesis for the post of Associate Professor, entitled "**Musical Terms and** Names **of Musical Instruments in Old** Turkish"; he was promoted to the rank of professor in August 1996.

70 This biography was sent to us at our request by Prof. Dr. Osman Fikri Sertkaya.

Prof. Dr. Osman Fikri Sertkaya founded the Department of *Contemporary Turkish Dialects and Literatures* at the Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University, and served as its head for two terms.

Professor Sertkaya also served as Director of the Institute of Turkish Studies at Istanbul University for 12 years, from February 1997 to February 2009; he is the person who held the post of Institute Director for the longest period after Ord. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Fuad Köprülü.

Between 2009 and 2013, he held the post of Head of the Department of Old Turkish Language within the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at the Faculty of Literature. On 11 August 2013, he retired from his position as a member of the academic staff at the Faculty of Literature, Istanbul University, after 43 years and 8 months of service, having reached the mandatory retirement age.

Osman Fikri Sertkaya, who is married to Prof. Dr Ayşegül Sertkaya, also served as "Deputy General Secretary" (1973–1983) at the Secretariat of the National and International Turkology Congresses organised by the Institute of Turkic Studies at Istanbul University; "Secretary-General" (1984–1988); and "Congress President" (1997–2009). Between 1973 and 2009, he facilitated the organisation of seventeen Turkology Congresses, seven of which were international and ten national. He established the Awards for Outstanding Service to Turkology.

In 1987, based on the "Agreement on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation" signed between Turkey and the Soviet Union, he established the "Turkish-Soviet and Soviet-Turkish Turkology Colloquia" in collaboration with the Committee of Soviet Turkologists and was appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to chair and coordinate the Turkish side of the colloquia. The bilateral colloquia were held in Baku, Elazığ, Almaty, Konya and Bishkek between 1988 and 1992. The proceedings were published in the *Annual *of Turkish Language Studies* – Bulletin*.

Osman Fikri Sertkaya, who received numerous awards during his academic career, was presented with a commemorative award in 1995 entitled '1,000 Years of the Manas Epic'

and the "Award for Service to the Turkic World", which he received from President Süleyman Demirel in 1999. Osman Fikri Sertkaya was awarded Honorary Membership of the Alimcan İbrahimov Institute of Language, Literature and Art at the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences in September 2002,Honorary Membership of the Alexander de Körös Csoma Institute in Hungary, and in 2016, the "Gold Medal" of the International Turkic Academy.

Prof. Dr Osman Fikri Sertkaya authored books on the language and culture of the Göktürk, Uyghur, Karakhanid, Kipchak, Chagatai, Early Ottoman and Modern Uyghur Turkish; and through more than 450 research papers published in domestic and international scientific journals—over 50 of which were published in German, French, English, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Azerbaijani—, and over 190 papers presented at national and international conferences, he has made significant contributions to the dissemination and recognition of Turkology both at home and abroad.

– How did you meet Hüseyin Nihal Atsız?

– I was 12 years old and had just finished primary school. My father brought me two volumes of books. *'My son, the time has come for you to read these,' he* said. The first book was titled ***The Death of the Grey Wolves***, and the second ***The Grey Wolves Rise Again***. The first was published in 1946 and the second in 1949. At that time, we had a vineyard—or rather, a summer house—in Adana. There, I read these two books one after the other, taking my time to absorb them. I enjoyed them. I read them again. That's how I learnt first-hand what the Kür Şad Revolution was like. Then I read the second book. In the second book, the love story between Ay Hanım and Urungu ends at the edge of a precipice. 'I hope they don't die,' I said, but both of them fell off the cliff. I cried too. That's how I came to know Nihal Atsız through his books.

Now let me make two observations here. The third volume of the ***Bozkurtlar*** series was started but left unfinished. This is because Atsız's younger son, Buğra, said: *'You wrote a book for my brother Yağmur, but you didn't write one for me.'* There is a third volume that was started at home but remains unfinished. If Buğra were to release it, everyone would see it. In other words, apart from me, the only person who knows about this is Buğra. Secondly: whilst writing Atsız Bey's life story, we discussed the subject of 'Kür Şad'. This was because every Sunday I would visit Atsız and catalogue the works in his library. Those Sundays were the finest days of my life. Whilst I was working between 2 o'clock and 5 or 6, he would interrupt my work every hour, saying, *'Have a rest, have some tea. Have a biscuit.'* I would then ask him my questions. One day I asked him about Kür Şad. *'There is no person called Kür Şad,'* he said. *'Only that person's Chinese name is known. According to the sources, he was the son of a Khan. I thought that the word "Kül Tegin" derived from the name "Kül" with an "r" sound, and so I arrived at the word "Kür". The titles of the Khan's children are "Şad". I thought, 'If anything, his name must be "Kür Şad".' I came up with that name myself,'* he said. But there is no such person in Turkish history. The name was loved and adopted as that of a fictional character. I might mention this later, but he had told me *to write on* many subjects—*'Write about this, write about that'*—but he had never told me to write about Kür Şad. Two or three years ago, three novels about Kür Şad were published. Following this, I published an academic article titled 'Was there a person named Kür Şad in Turkish history?' in Gazi University's **Türkiyat** Journal. [71]Professor Dr Ahmet Bican Ercilasun also discussed part of the subject in the **Yeniçağ** newspaper. Those interested can learn the origin of the term 'Kür Şad' from my article. It is a fine piece in which I also utilised information from Chinese sources. Now, based on the novel, Kür Şad is a historical figure, but there is no record of him under the name 'Kür Şad'.

71 Osman Fikri Sertkaya, 'The Etymology of the Name "Kür Şad" or Is There a Person Named Kür Şad in Turkish History?', Gazi Türkiyat, Journal of Turkish Studies, 14, Autumn 2014, Ankara, 2014, pp. 1–10.

The person who came up with this idea was Nihal Atsız. Furthermore, as 'Kür Şad' is a Turkish name, it is currently borne by thousands of people in Turkey as a first name or surname. Many people also believe that a Turk by that name actually existed. No such person exists. I never imagined that, at the age of 68, I would be commenting on a novel I read when I was 12. But Allah willed it.

– Professor, isn't there an incident in history where Kür Şad stormed the Chinese palace with 40 soldiers?

– That incident is true. The person's Chinese name appears in Chinese sources as follows: according to the Mandarin system, ***Chieh-shê-shuai*** = ***Chie shih shuai***; and according to the Pinyin system, ***Cie şı şuay***. He certainly had a Turkish name. But it is not recorded in any source. According to Nihal Atsız, this name must have been **Kür Şad**. Because Atsız said: *"The word 'Kür' survives in Turkish as 'gür'. A person might have thick hair, thick eyebrows, or a thick moustache. That is why I thought of the name* ***Kür Şad****, derived from the word 'gür'."* Thus, I have explained to you how I came to know Nihal Atsız. Now let me tell you how I saw him.

I had just moved up from the third year to the fourth year of Turkish Studies. One day, whilst chatting with Dursun Yıldırım in the corridor, Dursun Yıldırım said, *'Atsız is coming…'* I turned round to look. A man was approaching, holding a bag in his right hand, with a lock of hair falling across his forehead. Dursun immediately ran over to him. *'Welcome, sir. How can I help you?'* he asked. Mr Atsız asked, *'Where is Muharrem's (Ergin's) office?'* Dursun pointed to room 335 and came back to me. I was curious. 'I wonder *why Mr Atsız has come?* I asked Dursun. Dursun replied, *'What's there to wonder about? He's going to say, "Take Ahmet Bican on as your assistant."'* I joined the Department of Turkology because of Muharrem Ergin. A week after joining, I said, *'I'm going to be this professor's assistant.*' There was also a vacant assistant post in the Department of Old Turkish Language

. As Ahmet Bican was a year above me, he was due to graduate in 1967. If Muharrem Ergin took him on as a research assistant, I would end up teaching literature at one of the Anatolian secondary schools. It felt as though a sharp knife had been thrust into my heart. But I didn't say a word. I always keep my feelings to myself. Then Ahmet graduated. After graduation, Mr Muharrem sent Ahmet to Erzurum with Nuri Yüce. Ahmet Bican began his career in Erzurum as Kaya Bilgegil's assistant. ***Collected Folklore from the Arpaçay Estuary*** [72]was the book of that time. As for me: I was due to graduate in May '68. I went to Professor Muharrem Ergin's office to have my continuation certificate signed. Kemal Erarslan was also in the room. *"Osman, what are you thinking*?" he asked. *"I'm not thinking of anything, Professor. I'm just thinking of your health,"* I replied. He turned to Kemal Bey. *"Kemal, shall we take Osman on as an assistant at our department?"* he said. Kemal Erarslan replied, *"That would be excellent*, *Professor."* Muharrem Ergin said to me, *"You've set your mind on graduating in 3.5 years, but if you graduate in June just because you're determined to do so in 3.5 years, you won't be able to defer your military service in July – they'll send you off to the army. Take your graduation exam in September instead. That way, you'll get your military deferment sorted in July and gain another year's time. We'll announce the vacancies in September, so plan accordingly. My dear, don't aim to graduate in 3.5 years – let's make it 3 years and 9 months,"* he said. *"As you wish*, *Professor,"* I replied. When I went outside, I leaned against the wall, overcome with excitement. Dursun Yıldırım came over. *"Why's your face so red*?*" he* asked. *"Nothing's wrong*,*"* I said. He looked at me intently and asked, *"Did he offer you a research assistantship?" "Yes," I* said. We hugged each other. Dursun Yıldırım was the first to congratulate me. But the university unrest that began on 14 June 1968 caused so much disruption that, throughout 1969, the university was open for two days, closed for three, open for three, and closed for two. My post could not be announced for a whole year. At the Professors' Council meeting on 19 December 1969, Abdülkadir Karahan ho-

72 Ahmet Bican Ercilasun, Collections from the Villages of Arpaçay, Turkish Language Association Publications, 1998.

stated, *"There is an assistant professorship examination panel awaiting its turn in 19th place on the list. Let us discuss this as the first item. Let us select the panel. Otherwise, this post will be forfeited*." Following Professor Karahan's proposal, the selection of my examination panel was discussed as the first item at the Faculty Council of Professors, and my examination panel was selected. I sat the assistant post examination on 29 December 1969 and passed it. I took up my post on 5 January 1970. The date '5 January' is very significant to me, as it is Adana's Liberation Day… I was also born in Adana. I would like to say a few more words regarding this matter of the assistant post. At the International Congress of Turkology held in 2013, a panel had been planned for the opening session. The head of department, Mustafa Özkan, said, *"Professor, you are the only one left from the 1973 team. You have worked to organise 32 Congresses of Turkology. Would you please chair the panel?*" "Certainly," I replied. Whilst chairing the panel alongside professors such as György Hazai, Mübahat Kütükoğlu, Günay Kut and Ahmet Bican Ercilasun, I would occasionally share an anecdote after each speaker's presentation. The anecdote I shared after Ahmet's talk was as follows: *'In our day, it was easy to become a marshal, but difficult to become an assistant. Because assistant posts at the university only came up once every ten years, and* I recounted how*, in 1967, Atsız came and went into Muharrem Ergin's office, and Dursun also* said *he'd come to ensure Ahmet Bican was appointed as an assistant*." *'But I don't know what was discussed there*,' I said. Ahmet leaned in and looked at me. *'I know what was discussed. Shall I tell you?' he* asked. *'Of course, go on, Ahmet; let everyone know, and I'll find out too,' I* said. *'What Dursun said is true. Atsız first went to Ahmet Caferoğlu and said, 'I want to be appointed as an assistant.' He left there and went to Muharrem Ergin to tell him. But when Atsız recommended that I be appointed as an assistant, he received a reply from Mr Muharrem that he hadn't expected at all. 'I won't be appointing Ahmet as my assistant. I have my own candidate for the assistant post. His name is Osman Fikri Sertkaya; I'm going to appoint Osman as my assistant*,*' he* said. Atsız also told this to my father-in-law, İzzet Yolalan, over the phone. *'Blimey, Muharrem turned me down. This Osman Fikri Sertkaya*

"Whose what? Let Ahmet have a look," he said. When Ahmet Bican told me this, I was able to piece a lot of things together. It went like this: after I graduated in 1968, one day Prof. Dr Muammer Kemal Özergin – who was our lecturer in the History Department – said, *"I'm off to see Bayram Atsız. Would you like to come along?"* I replied, *"I'd be delighted*." We met up with the professor in Kadıköy. We boarded the Kartal–Pendik minibuses and got off at Maltepe. We went to the professor's house. After the usual *'Welcome, Muammer'* greetings, Mr Atsız asked, *'Muammer, who is this gentleman?'* Özergin replied, *'He is a very talented graduate of our Department of Turkology, sir. He admires you greatly and reads your writings. I've brought him along. I'd like you to meet him*.' Mr Atsız asked me, *"What is your name?" "Sir, my name is Osman Fikri, my surname is Sertkaya,"* I replied. *"Where* are *you from*, *Osman?*" he asked. *"I'm from Adana, sir,"* I said. *"Where did your family come from originally?" he* asked. *"'My father's side came from Central Anatolia, but my mother and my maternal grandmother were from the Bulak neighbourhood of Kirkuk; they migrated to the village of Büyük Dikili in Adana in the 1910s,'* I said, and Mr Atsız laughed. *'Ah,* so *one side of the person Muharrem is going to marry is Turkmen, then…'* he must have thought. Now I'll tell you something I've never told anyone before. I learnt Turkish in primary school. Because at home, we never spoke Turkish. We always spoke Turkmen and the Adana dialect. It was in primary school that I first learnt the words of the written language. I'd go there every time. *"Mum, Teacher Gülsüm said you mustn't say 'girl' today." "What am I supposed to say then?" "I'm supposed to say 'daughter'." "Mum, Teacher Gülsüm said you mustn't say 'sister' today." "What am I supposed to say then?" "I'm supposed to say 'brother'."* I learnt the standard written Turkish in primary school. Because at home, let's say everyone speaks a bit of Kirkuk Turkish and a bit of the Adana dialect. The Adana dialect is a local language. I'd learnt it very well from my playmates on the street. Years later, I got married. I took my wife to Adana. I showed her the house where I was born. Just then, my childhood friend Şahin turned up. We started chatting in the Adana dialect. My wife, Ayşegül

listened to us for five minutes. She's a proper Istanbul girl. After my friend had gone, she turned to me. *'Why did you hide from me that you knew another language? What language were you speaking? What's your background?'* she asked. I said, *'No, come on, this is Adana dialect, a local language. It's a language formed from a mixture of the Adana dialect and Turkmen.* It's *not Kurdish or anything like that, as you might have thought—don't go thinking that*." She replied, *"No, I didn't think that, but do you come from a different ethnic background?* It's *a completely different language; it doesn't sound like the Istanbul dialect*." Now, 45 years later, I learnt from Ahmet Bican what Mr Atsız had discussed with Muharrem Ergin and why he'd chosen me. Ahmet knew this, but as the time wasn't right, he hadn't told me for 45 years.

– How did the 'Hocam Atsız Armağanı' come about?

– Now let's move on to the third stage. This was when I met Mr Atsız. I got to know him through his book. I went to his home, met him, and he recognised me too. The year was 1974. In 1975, Atsız turned 70. Mustafa Kafalı from the History Department, Necmettin Hacıeminoğlu from the Department of Turkology, and Erol Güngör from the Department of Psychology and Sociology. These three enterprising individuals said, *'Let's put together a tribute to Nihal Atsız, and let Ötüken Publishing House print it.'* Mustafa Kafalı wrote pieces for everyone. Meanwhile, I was also asked to contribute an article. However, when Erol Güngör suffered a heart condition and underwent surgery, Mustafa Kafalı went to the Department of Turkology in Baghdad, and Hacıeminoğlu went to France for two years, the commemorative book was left in limbo. They said, *'Go to Osman Fikri Sertkaya. 'Osman can publish this commemorative volume on his own.'* Nurhan and Erol from Ötüken Publications came and said, *'Professor, the situation is such and such.'* I replied, *'Very well, let's do whatever is necessary*.' They said, *'Professor, we'll remove the others' names; if you do it.'* I replied, *'That's utter nonsense, my friend…' 'Put my name under those three people's names; that makes four. The professors have taken the initiative; the articles*

. *We can't leave any names out,"* I said. They also mentioned that Atsız's life story was to be written. *"Someone will write it…" I* said. *"No, Professor, you're supposed to write it,"* they said. I replied, *"Look, my friend, you can't just force this on me. I'll go and ask him myself. What if he says, 'Let Ahmet Bican Ercilasun write it, let Dursun Yıldırım write it, let Faruk Çil write it, let Adalet Ergenekon write it, let Aydil Erol write it'? There are people closer to Atsız. I'll ask for his permission. If he says 'Yes', I'll write it,' I* said. For this reason, together with Ahmet Bican, we went to the house in Bostancı where Atsız had last lived. He had sold his house in Maltepe and moved to Bostancı. Around that time, a journalist named Ali Kemal Meram had published a book entitled ***The Göktürk Empire*** [73]. That book contained a great deal of inaccurate information. I, too, wrote articles for the ***Orta-Doğu*** newspaper over a period of four weeks under the heading *The **Göktürk** Empire*. The titles of my articles are as follows: 'The Göktürk Empire, 1. The Case of Bögü Kagan', **Orta-Doğu* (Newspaper),* 17 August 1974, Monday, p. 2; 'The Göktürk Empire, 2. The Tonga Tigin Incident,
3. Who was İnel Kağan?, 4. Who was Yulug Tigin?", *Orta-Doğu (Newspaper),* 24 August 1974, Saturday, p. 2; 'The Göktürk Empire, 5. The Death of Kapgan Khan, 6. Bilge's Ascension to the Throne', *Orta-Doğu (Newspaper),* 1 September 1974, Sunday, p. 2; "The Göktürk Empire", *Orta-Doğu (Newspaper),* 23 September 1974, Monday, pp. 2 and 8; "Issues in Göktürk history: Kül Tigin or Köl Tigin?", *Türk Edebiyatı,* vol. 35, November 1974, pp. 23–25.

A publishing house in Ankara had also cut out my articles and stuck one or two of them to its window. Then someone went inside and said, *'Hey, you've published a book called *The Göktürk Empire*, but the two articles you've stuck to the window are tearing your book to shreds. They're pointing out the errors in it. Why did you stick them up without reading them first?"* They hurriedly tore my articles down from there. I learnt about this from an article Aydil Erol wrote in the newspaper. But

73 Ali Kemal Meram, *The Göktürk Empire*, Nokta Publications, 2006.

Mr Atsız had also read my four articles and my writings in *Türk Edebiyatı*. When we went to ask his permission, Ahmet rang the doorbell. The door was opened from upstairs. We went inside. We went up one floor. When he saw Ahmet, Mr Atsız's face lit up. *"Oh, my dear Ahmet, welcome,"* he said. This was because Atsız had been a witness at the wedding of Ahmet Bican and his wife, Bilge Yolalan. Then he saw me, but couldn't quite place me. He gestured with his hand, as if to ask, '*Who is this gentleman*?' When Ahmet replied, *'Professor, don't you remember Osman Sertkaya?'*, he said, *'Ah, Osman Bey, I've read your articles from the Middle East. You say that Bilge Tonyukuk Boyla Baga Tarkan is a single person. I, however, portrayed him as two people in *Bozkurtlar*. 'What shall we do now? How shall we put this right?'* Ahmet Bican replied, *'Sir, they're fictional characters; can you correct a novel?'* I glanced discreetly at my watch; we'd been chatting at the door for 17 minutes. Then Mr Atsız said, *'Come now, lads, why are you standing at the door? Do come in*.' It turned out Atsız had an adopted daughter. The person looking after Atsız was Kaniye Hanım. *"Kaniye, make us some tea. Bring some of those biscuits from Japan and Lapland too."* I would later often hear that these biscuits from Japan and Lapland were actually Ülker's pötibör biscuits, and that this was one of Atsız's little jokes. I was asked the reason for my visit. I replied, *'Sir, it is not right for me to tell you this; I would be spoiling the surprise. But I have no choice now. The Turkish academic community wishes to publish a commemorative book for you. However, the three professors who were supposed to take the initiative are absent due to various reasons. I am the fourth person. I will be the one to publish the commemorative book. Ötüken Publishing House also wants me to write your life story. To this I replied, 'I cannot be forced into this; I shall go and consult Mr Atsız. If he says someone else should write it, we shall comply. But if he says, "You write it," I shall regard it as an order and write it.' 'That is the reason for my visit,'* I said, to which he replied, *'Write, but do not ask me anything; if you write without consulting me, I'll accept it.'* So I worked on it myself for the first two months. Some magazines were inaccessible, as the Turkic nationalist publications had been confiscated from libraries. The events during Ismet Pasha's time… Neither **Atsız**

There's no **Mecmua**, no **Orkun**, no **Kopuz**, no **Çınaraltı**. I rang Mr Atsız. *"Sir, I can't get hold of some of these magazines; I can't access them. 'Would it be a bother if I came along on Sundays between 2 and 5 o'clock to work from your own copy in your library?'* I asked. *'No, come along,'* he said. I finished through the **Atsız** Mecmua and the **Orkun**. Then one day he brought out a large, black notebook from inside. *'I've written everything I've ever written here. Complete your list from here.'* I replied, *'No, I won't complete it from there; I need to see it all.' 'Why?'* he asked. *'I believe in two things: in God in the heavens, and in my own eyes on earth,'* I said, and he laughed. Indeed, he had listed the works he had sent exactly as he had written them, whereas the publishers had made changes to the titles of those articles. I found that the publication details of twelve of his articles differed from those in his own records. He greatly appreciated my attention to detail. I also wrote his life story very well. The bibliographic details are as follows: "Hüseyin Nihal Atsız (12 January 1905–Istanbul/11 December 1975–Istanbul), His Life and Works", *Atsız Armağanı,* Istanbul 1976, I+XCII pp. Whilst I was writing it, he would stop me every hour, *'Have a cup of tea, eat a biscuit; you need to rest now and then.'* I asked him about the issues regarding Turkish history that were on my mind. *He* asked *me* to write certain things down. *'You're much better at bibliography than I am; you're young. I'd been thinking of this İnel Kağan as İniel Kağan. Write that down,' he* said. I wrote it down straight away. It was published in **the Atsız Armağanı** [74]. The Turkish version appeared under the title: 'Issues in Göktürk History: Is it Inel Kagan or Ini İl Kagan?', *Atsız Armağanı,* Istanbul 1976, pp. 397–419. Two years later, the German version was published in **Materialia Turcica** under the title "Probleme der köktürkischen Geschichte: Muss es 'Inel Kagan' oder 'Ini İl Kagan' heißen?", **Materialia Turcica*,* III (1977), Bochum 1978, pp. 16–32. Later, within these conversations, *he remarked: "I read somewhere that the word 'op' in the verb 'Oplayu tegmek' means 'ox', but I could not find it."*

74 Collective, Atsız Armağanı, Ötüken Neşriyat, 1976. For the revised and expanded edition, see Collective, Altınordu Yayınları, 2017

'You might be able to find this article,' he said. This article *appears* in the Ali Nihat Tarlan commemorative volume as 'Issues in Göktürk History: On the expression "oplayu tegmek" found in the *Köl Tigin* and *Köl-İç-Çor* inscriptions', *Journal of Turkic Studies – Research on Turkic Studies,* Vol. 7, 1983, Orhan Şâik Gökyay Commemorative Volume, II. (1984), pp. 369–375."

However, some 15–20 years later, whilst we were preparing for publication in the TDK the work by Willi Bang-Kaup, translated from German into Turkish by the late Şinasi Tekin**, entitled "Letters on Turkology from the Hungarian Institute in Berlin (1925–1934)**[75]", which the late Şinasi Tekin had translated from German into Turkish, at the Turkish Language Association (TDK)—but when Şinasi Tekin died, the TDK halted the publication—I found the passage that Atsız had read in the "Seventh Letter". Willi Bang-Kaup had come across the word **op** in the *Dîvânü Lügâti't-Türk* and made a note of it. In the 'Seventh Letter' (p. 194), he wrote, quoting from Mahmud of Kashgar, that *'op'* means 'an ox harnessed to a plough'. The source Atsız referred to when he told me, *'I read it somewhere but cannot recall it now',* is 'Turkologische Briefe aus dem Berliner Ungarischen Institut. Siebter Brief. Neue Ansichten – neue Einsichten? that is, 'Letters on Turkology from the Hungarian Institute in Berlin. Seventh Letter. New Views – New Perspectives',
p. 194."

He said to me, *'Write this, write that.*' I took his words as a command and wrote them down. But he never actually told me to write about Kür Şad one day. The subject just came up, so I wrote about it. Now everyone is saying, *'You've spoken the most; you were by his side in recent years—is there anything you'd like to tell us?'* There's nothing I wish to say. The things entrusted to me were not entrusted to me to be passed on to others. He had certain requests of his own. *'After I'm gone,'* he said, *'if anyone disputes these, write them down.*' So I replied, *'No one will believe me; in that case, give them to me in writing, in your own handwriting, so that if anyone says these things after you're gone, I*

75 Willi Bang Kaup, trans. Şinasi Tekin, Letters on Turkology from the Hungarian Institute in Berlin (1925–1934), 1980.

'You're lying. Whoever you are, you're lying; I'll publish this in your own handwriting to show that this is the truth,' I said. I now have two or three pages. They're kept in a bank safe… His son Buğra is my friend, but I haven't told him either. I won't tell anyone. There was one instance where I objected to someone who wanted to do it. I explained the situation. *'This is Atsız's view; if you claim Atsız's "two homelands" theory as your own, the text is there in the bank vault in his own handwriting*, and *I'll publish it*,*'* I said. I put a stop to it. Nothing came of the other two. I think some things should remain in the shadows of history so that a person can rest in peace in their grave. It's not as if I've been entrusted with some great secret or anything. Let me say that too.

Now I'll say something that will upset Ahmet and Dursun. I've finished my work. He read *it* himself. *'Change one sentence,' he* said. I won't tell anyone what that sentence is. But he liked the life story and said, *'Ask of me whatever you wish…' 'Sir, I wish you good health*,*'* I said. *'You've used up your first wish,' he* said. *'I'm asking about your second wish—ask me for whatever you like…' 'I truly wish you good health*,*'* I said. 'Look, *I'm asking about your third and final wish. Ask me for whatever you wish. Whatever you want, I'll do it, I'll give it to you,"* he said. So I said, 'Since you've said that, *I have two requests of you.' 'What are they?'* he asked. *'One is* ****Collected Works from Turkish History* (76)***, *and the other is* ****History of Turkish Literature* (77)***, *which you had 100 copies printed whilst teaching at Boğaziçi High School. If you have two copies of each, I'd like one of each,'* I said. Mr Atsız was then in a very difficult position. Because he had two copies of each of these books. But he was keeping the second copies for his younger son, Buğra Atsız. He paused for a moment, went to the library, pulled out a black, hardback book, took a pair of scissors, and cut out the dedication page. *"Osman, this book belongs to Bedriye. I'd signed it for Bedriye; I've cut out the dedication. You know—*

76 Atsız, Compilations in Turkish History, Ötüken Publications, 6th edition, 2015,

77 Atsız, History of Turkish Literature, Ötüken Publications, 9th edition, 2015,

*You know Bedriye Atsız better than I do; you call her 'Bedriye Anne'. You hold her in high regard, so let me give you her book. I'll also fetch and give you the *History of Turkish Literature* that I'd been keeping for my son; let him use my copy, and you, too, are like a son to me,"* he said. He went inside. He brought me the copy of ***History of Turkish Literature*** that he had set aside for Buğra. Upon this, I said, *"Sir, if one day these are found in my library, people will say, 'He took them on loan from Atsız, forgot about them and didn't return them.' 'Would you mind signing them for me?'* I asked. *'Of course,'* he replied. Both books, signed by Nihal Atsız with the inscription *'To the esteemed Turkologist Osman Fikri Sertkaya, with my best wishes for success…'*, now stand amongst the treasured volumes of my library. When I returned home, I added the date of that day in pencil. Now Ahmet, Dursun and others have asked for these books, but the Professor has always said, 'I don't have them.' I think that when Ahmet and Dursun read this, they will understand why Mr Atsız gave them to me and will acknowledge that he 'did the right thing'. Then I went into the army. As an Air Commando in the Kütahya Air Brigade… It was a four-month stint. There were 1,552 of us from the university. They discharged us just before the holiday, so I came back. It was the day before the holiday. During the drills involving 'lie down, get up, crawl' commands, I'd dropped from 76 kilos to 63 kilos. "Tomorrow I'll go to Atsız's, give a crisp heel salute, and he'll see a sharp-as-a-knife reserve officer," I thought. At 11 o'clock that night, the news bulletin read: *"Nihal Atsız, who suffered a heart attack at home at 9 o'clock today, has unfortunately passed away despite efforts to save him.* Her *funeral will take place tomorrow from the Osman Ağa Mosque in Kadıköy."* I was frozen to the spot. On the first day of the festival, everyone was at the Osman Ağa Mosque. When *the imam* said 'In the name of *a brave man'* during the funeral prayer, Fethi Gemuhluoğlu cried out: *'Imam, stop. Has this prayer stone ever seen such a man before? Now continue with the prayer."* After Mr Atsız's prayer had been performed, his coffin was carried on people's shoulders to Karacaahmet Cemetery and laid to rest there.

– Professor, how did you come to decide to write the book about Atsız Bey's life?

– When I wrote Atsız's biography for the **Atsız** Memorial, two people—whose names I shall not mention—plagiarised the biography I had written, along with the list of his works, adding only minor alterations. Ötüken Publishing House wanted to take legal action against these two individuals. I prevented them from doing so. *"There's no need; if they aren't your readers, let them get to know Atsız,"* I said. Then one day, regarding the Minister of Culture, Mükerrem Taşçıoğlu—I was a member of the Ministry of Culture's Committee on Source Works at the time—they said, *"The Minister is asking to see you*." "*Is it about today's incident?*" I asked. *"Yes,"* they replied. Today's incident was as follows: The year was 1987. There were 30 of us on the Ministry of Culture's committees. The Minister said: *"We also wish to publish *Nihal Atsız: Her Life and Works* as part of the *Great Turks* series. 'Who amongst you will write this?'* Four or five people there, including Kazım Yaşar Kopraman and Reşat Genç, all turned and pointed at me. *'Osman will write it…'* they said. They did not mention any other name. When I went before the Minister, he said, *'My son, I have spoken to others too; they say Osman is the best person to write it.' 'As you wish, sir,'* I replied. The book was commissioned as 'Turkish Greats' to the Minister's specifications, comprising 160 pages; however, it eventually grew to 180 pages. I wrote the book *The **Life and Works** of **Nihal** Atsız*, which was published by the Ministry [78]

Nihal Atsız, who was arrested on 3 May 1944 on the grounds that he was a Turkist-Turanist, was recognised as one of the Great Turks. More than 40 years after his arrest and acquittal, in 1987, the volume ***The Life and Works of Nihal Atsız*** was published with the support of the Ministry of Culture. In a sense, this constitutes the state's apology to Atsız.

78 Nihal Atsız, Ministry of Culture and Tourism Publications: 847; Great Turks Series: 69; Ankara 1987, p. 179.

Then one night, the telephone rang at my home in Moda. A lady secretary said, *'Sir, we're calling from the Ministry of Culture. The Minister would like to speak to you.' 'Put him through, my dear,'* I said. Mr Mükerrem asked, *'My son Osman, how are you?' 'Sir, I pray for your good health; please go ahead,'* I replied. The Minister asked, *"A very strange incident occurred in Parliament today. Do you know what happened?" "Sir, if you tell me, I shall find out,"* I replied. The Minister continued, *"Today, the budget debates were taking place. CHP Senator Ali Topuz took to the podium holding a book on Nihal Atsız published by the Ministry of Culture. 'Oh dear! Now there's going to be a huge row,' I thought. Ali Topuz said, 'Sir, I have here a book published by our Ministry of Culture. This book is titled The* ***Life and Works of Nihal Atsız****. Ever since our childhood, we have known Nihal Atsız as a racist, Turanist and skull-measurer. I wondered how the Ministry could publish a book about such a man, but I decided not to pass judgement without reading it, given my age. I started at 11 pm and finished at 4 am; I couldn't put it down. How wrong we've been about Nihal Atsız. How wrongly he's been portrayed to us. Atsız was apparently Köprülü's assistant, a man whose heart beat for Turkishness. He's written 30 volumes of history books outside the university. He's written novels, poems, essays, and hundreds of articles. Friends (*holding up the book*), after reading this book, I've completely changed all my views. I recommend it to you. Do get hold of it and read it. Mr Minister, I'd also like to congratulate you for presenting us with the truth and the facts. However, I couldn't quite place this Osman Fikri Sertkaya—I couldn't work out who he was. I think he's a young academic. 'You should also congratulate this young man for not mixing any politics into the book and for presenting Atsız objectively,' he said. 'You've earned great praise today,'* he added. *'Sir, I'm happy for you and for myself,'* I said. *'I'll suggest another book to you,' he* said. *'Please, sir…' I* replied. *'Would you write about Nazım Hikmet?'* he asked. I replied, *'I have just one condition: Nazım was a member of the Communist Party. He openly states this. This is his political view, not his poetry. It's not about his other work. World*

view is this… If you do not remove the fact that he is a member of the Communist Party from the book, I will write it. We cannot portray him any other way. The world of poetry is separate," I said. *"No, Osman, in that case let it stay as it is, because I cannot explain this either within the party or in politics," he* said. The book about Nihal Atsız was published in '87. Two or three years ago, Ötüken Publications had decided to publish all of Atsız's books. After 15 or 16 volumes had been published, a dispute arose again with his children, and publication was halted. I do not know why it was halted. *They* simply told me, *'Let's reprint your book that was published by the Ministry of Culture.'* I replied, *'I'll write an introduction evaluating the publications that have come out since 1975, update the book, so that young people can read it.'* Here is the second edition of my book, originally published by the Ministry of Culture in 1987, which was published by Ötüken Yayınları in 2014: ***Hüseyin Nihal Atsız. (His Life and Works)***, Istanbul, 206 pp. This is the story of the first edition of the book published by Ötüken Yayınları.

I also obtained Atsız's handwritten manuscript from Muhiddin Nalbantoğlu. Muhiddin was our friend, a person we held dear. Beneath Atsız's handwriting, I wrote: 'From the archive of Muhiddin Nalbantoğlu'. I also took the published photograph of Atsız, the one in the commemorative volume, and many other photographs of him that were subsequently published. That photograph was taken by me in May 1975. I also took a similar photograph for Reha Oğuz, and
I have accumulated around 15,000 photographs. I am considering donating them to an archive.

– Do you have any information about the book *Turkish History*, which Atsız Bey is said to have written but which is claimed to have gone missing after his death?

– There are one or two matters that everyone is curious about and which are the subject of speculation. The first of these is that Atsız had written a *History of the Turks*, which was reportedly on his desk at the moment of his death. Supposedly, they tied the legs of the desk with a sheet, and then that history book was

stolen; one day

It's rumoured to be coming out, rumoured, rumoured, rumoured. I've been asked about this a great many times. Let me make this clear once and for all: no such history book has been written. However, there is a draft at home. That draft consists of comments that Atsız wrote from time to time. Let me put it this way: for instance, to understand the history book ***Collected Essays on Turkish History***, one must reiterate Atsız's view. Atsız did not believe that the Turks had founded hundreds of states. In his view, the Turks had established two great empires—one in Asia and one in Anatolia—and these empires were ruled by dynasties. Now, at university, we say, 'The Göktürks ruled in Asia between 550 and 750.' Then we say, 'The Kyrgyz ruled between 750 and 850.' Then we say, 'The Uighurs and the Karakhanids ruled between 850 and 1250.' But did they actually distinguish themselves in this way? There is no such reality. University lecturers, to simplify matters, have divided the 'Turkic Khaganate' or 'Turkic Empire' into sections such as 'Göktürks, Kyrgyz, Uighurs and Karakhanids', but the language is the same, the people are the same, the alphabet is the same, and the geography is the same. So what is the difference between the Göktürks and the Uighurs? Even the script is the same. Aren't the inscriptions of the First, Second and Third Uighur Khans written in the Göktürk alphabet? What has changed? It follows, then, that it is we who have made the distinction. The 'Turkic Khaganate' or 'Turkic Hakanate' established in Asia is categorised according to the ruling dynasties. In other words, the 'Aşina' or 'Açina' Dynasty ruled for 200 years; after the death of Khagan Ozmış, the 'Yağlakar' Dynasty ruled for nearly 100 years. After them came the 'Buğra Dynasty', which we call the 'Karakhanids'. Initially, the Uyghur script was used; then, with the adoption of Islam, the Arabic script gradually came into use. In this regard, Atsız states*: 'Are these Turks mad, my friend? They'll establish a state, then destroy it; re-establish it, then destroy it again. Such a thing is impossible. 'The Turkic state* is *one that has existed since Mete. As the ruling dynasties and lineages have changed, we* simply *assign names for convenience's sake today."* Accordingly, Atsız traces the line from Mete, through the Göktürks of 552,

in his work *Collected Essays on Turkish History*. After that, he wrote the sections on the Uighurs, the Karakhanids and the others. He included illustrations throughout. He included illustrations of people with Kyrgyz features, wearing Kyrgyz and Kazakh clothing. He also asked me for photographs of my mother for the Turkmen of Kirkuk. So I took copies of the photograph of my mother—which appears on the cover of the fifth volume of *Turkmen Tribes of the South* by Ali Rıza Yalman Yalkın [79], the director of the Adana Museum—and brought them to Mr Atsız. *'God willing, I will compile these 3–5 pages and present this as a work to demonstrate the unity and integrity of Turkish* history,' he said. There are two bedside tables, one on the right and one on the left of Atsız's bed. This work, referred to as 'Turkish History', is kept inside one of those bedside tables. Buğra also said, *'My father's notes are kept there.'* At present, there is no work titled **'Turkish** History' that has been typed up in any form, be it 150 pages or, say, 300 pages, and so on. There is no such single-volume work. The drafts of a work that is in fragments are there… Had he lived for another five years, perhaps he would have published it as a single volume. Had he lived, he would have written the third volume on the Göktürks as a novel. In other words, the volume on Buğra would also have been written. But as he was a student at the military medical school, he knew he was having a heart attack; he said, *'I am going to die*.' Two hours later, at the age of 70, he passed away. If modern technology and medical care had been available, he would have been rushed to hospital by ambulance straight away, his heart would have been scanned, an angiogram would have been performed, and the heart attack could have been prevented. But Atsız packed so much into his 70 years that he left us orphaned.

– Professor, it is also said that Mr Atsız's financial situation was poor; what are your thoughts on this?

Now they're talking about his financial situation. In the 1940s, everyone did their utmost to leave him destitute. To make ends meet

79 Ali Rıza Yalman Yalkın, Turkmen Tribes in the South 1, Publications of

the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Turkey, 1977.

He sold his books to make ends meet. He published a book entitled ***Turkey Will Never Bow Down*** [80]under the pseudonym Sururi Ermete. Sururi Ermete was an extremely nationalist, Turkic-oriented, patriotic soldier who bore that name. Atsız did not ask him if he could use his name. Tahsin Demiray, the owner of Türkiye Publishing House, knowing that Atsız was in need of money and would not accept any donations, had Atsız write the book *Turkey Will **Never Bow** Down* and told him: *"It will be published under Sururi Bey's name. He will sign it and give you the money as the author. You'll get what you need from there."* Consequently, Atsız did not use the name Sururi Ermete. Türkiye Publishing House used that patriotic man's name; the man signed it, received the royalties, and presented the money to Mr Atsız, who was sitting beside him. I am saying this because a young man has emerged from the Black Sea region; these young people get very excited. They say, *'Yücel Hacaloğlu is lying, Sertkaya isn't writing the truth…'* As if he were the only one who knew the truth. I wonder, which lie is Yücel Hacaloğlu telling? Which mistake is Sertkaya writing about? If he'd been polite enough to pick up the phone and ask, I would have told him myself that Atsız had personally explained the matter to me.

– Which incident is this chap claiming is a lie?

– There are certain statements circulating claiming that this Sururi Ermete incident is a lie.

– Who is the person making these claims?

– I don't know him. I don't remember who he is. I mean, I saw him, had a laugh, and moved on. People, young people, are getting a bit hot-headed. Many friends don't bother to ask someone who knows. Yücel Hacaloğlu

80 Turkey Will Never Bow Down, Sururi Ermete, Gavsi Ozansoy Press, 1946.

If they were to ask a knowledgeable, level-headed expert like him, they'd learn the truth of the matter. I'm reading articles written about Atsız in various places; many are mere speculation, and many are by people incapable of understanding Atsız. In my opinion, one must read him not just once, but many times. This is the man who, in the 1940s, sold some of the books from his library to buy food for his newborn child. The man who wrote books under a pseudonym… People have been at Atsız's throat his whole life. Let me tell you something else that nobody here knows. This is something I'm going to reveal for the first time. In 1932, whilst Atatürk was speaking about the Central Asia Theory at the Turkish Language Congress or the Turkish History Congress, Zeki Velidi Togan took to the podium. *"The story of a great sea in Central Asia is a myth, a fairy tale. There were never 17 cities around it. Where does this legend of the 17 cities buried under the sand come from?"* When he presented this paper, Reşit Galip Bey took to the podium to speak against Zeki Velidi Togan, saying, *"This gentleman is a divisive figure who split the Volga-Ural Turks right down the middle like a cucumber, saying 'You are Tatars, we are Bashkirs'. Now he comes here—does he wish to divide the Theory of the Central Asian Turkic Union? Is this man a provocateur, an agent sent here by the Russians? I am ashamed on behalf of those listening to this man's lecture*." You will find these remarks in the sources. In response, Nihal Atsız—who was Fuat Köprülü's language assistant but whose main field was history—along with his friends Pertev Naili Boratav, Adnan Ötüken, Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, Bedriye Atsız and three or four others, a total of nine people, sent a telegram to Reşit Galip. *'We, however, take pride in being students of Zeki Velidi.'* Upon hearing this, Atatürk is said to have asked, *'Who is this Nihal Atsız?' 'Fuat Köprülü's assistant,'* they replied. *'Expel him from the university; there is no need for such people…'* he is reported to have said. However, when the order came on this matter, Köprülü summoned Nihal Bey and said, *"This is Gazi Pasha's wish. Your telegram has annoyed him. Resign, and I'll find you a post elsewhere. I'll bring you back to the university later."* Following this, some exchanges took place between them—the details of which I shall not go into here—and

Nihal Bey did not resign. Upon this, Köprülü temporarily handed the Deanship of the Faculty of Literature to a diplomat named Ali Muzaffer. Ali Muzaffer, in turn, removed Nihal Atsız from his post as an assistant in the Department of Turkology at the Faculty of Literature without giving any reason. It is this incident that all the rumours about him 'slapping the Dean' and so on are based on.

– So, is the incident of slapping the Dean not true?

– No, there was no such lack of courtesy. It was simply that, upon entering the meeting at Tokatlayan, he didn't say hello. There was a bit of a spat, a few harsh words exchanged, but Atsız is not the sort of man who lacks the courtesy to go so far as to slap another person—let alone a superior. He's someone who addresses everyone formally and speaks courteously… The only time he gets angry and becomes sensitive is when there's a negative situation concerning Turkishness; he intervenes then. This has become second nature to him as a reaction to what minorities did to him during his childhood at the schools he attended. His expulsion from the military medical school following a false accusation by an Albanian officer… Now, nobody knows this; every year, on the day he left the military medical school—the Haydar Pasha High School building—he would go there and walk around the building once. He then went on to teach at Haydar Pasha High School. Whilst teaching there, he witnessed the mistakes of the Minister of National Education of the time and others. When he wrote about these, he was removed from his teaching post. Through the intercession of his classmate Tahsin Banguoğlu, he became a civil servant at the Süleymaniye Library, where he remained until his death. Atsız's class was an interesting one. Nihal Atsız, Orhan Şaik Gökyay, Nihat Sami Banarlı, Tahsin Banguoğlu, Pertev Naili Boratav, Ziya Karamuk. Perhaps Fevziye Abdullah Tansel was also in that class, but I think she was in a later year group. Of Atsız's classmates, the only one I did not meet was Mr Pertev Naili Boratav. I discussed certain topics with Orhan Şâik Gökyay, Nihat Sami Banarlı and others. Orhan Şâik says, *'Nihat Sami is*

going to write a history of literature,

Köprülü didn't take him on as an assistant. He didn't take me on either, saying he was going to carry out research himself." Now, perhaps these are simply Mr Orhan Şâik's own thoughts and opinions. But there is also a rumour that, even back then, it was difficult to find a post in the civil service. Perhaps Köprülü was unable to find a post for him. But Orhan Şâik says: *'He could have taken us on as assistants at the Institute of Turkish Studies.'* Orhan Şâik Gökyay remained outside the university system. Yet he became a serious researcher who authored dozens of works. The poem **'Whose Country** Is **This**?' is proof enough.

– What was Atsız Bey's student life like? Did you speak to his classmates?

– I've always spoken about Atsız with Banguoğlu and Orhan Şâik. One day, he went to class wearing traditional Turkestan attire. The teacher asked, *'Nihal Bey, what is this outfit?'* Atsız replied, *'This is the traditional attire of the Turks.'* It was the traditional attire of the Central Asian Turks. The teacher said, *'Well then, Nihal Bey, aren't we Turks?'* Banguoğlu says, *'When the teacher asked that question, Nihal sat down at his desk.'* The excitement of youth… He simply felt what he felt.

Let me tell you about another incident. In the mid-1950s, a census was being carried out. At that time, there was a curfew during the census. A census officer would visit every household in each neighbourhood. They would ask for your first name, surname, date of birth, place of birth, whether you were married or single, your religion, and so on. Meanwhile, a census officer arrived at Nihal Atsız's home in Maltepe. Mr Atsız welcomed him, and the census officer began asking his questions. After questioning Mr Atsız, the officer turned to his eldest son, Yağmur. At this, Mr Atsız asked, *"Are the questions finished?"* The officer replied, *"Yes, sir, I've filled in the rest myself."* Mr Atsız says, *"You didn't ask about my religion…" "Sir, I automatically wrote 'Islam',"* replies the official. Atsız says, *"No, you can't just write it automatically; you have to ask."* The official asks, *"Very well, sir, what is your religion?"* Atsız says, *"My religion is '…"* The census official is taken aback: *"What?"* he asks. Atsız replies, *"I follow*

. *The ancient Turks were Shamans, and I am a Shaman too,"* he says. The census officer says, *"Oh dear, sir…"* and so on. Atsız says, *"Look here, what's it to you? Just write down what I've said." "Isn't it my religion? For minorities, they say 'Greek Orthodox', 'Catholic', 'Protestant'. For Jews, they say 'Jewish'. Muslims say 'Islam'. You're writing down theirs, so why aren't you writing down my Shamanism? Write 'Shaman' there."* The second Shamanist was Yağmur, the third was Buğra; our friend İsmail Hakkı Gökhun was at home that day. He was there too. He also said, *"My religion* is *Shamanism*." It seems they'd discussed this beforehand, because that evening, whilst the census results were being broadcast on the radio, the newsreader said, *'As a result of the population census, 17 adherents of Shamanism—the ancient Turkish religious belief—were identified in Istanbul.'* They'd reported the same from other places too. So there were four people in Atsız. When İsmail Hakkı Gökhun recounted this – he was also a well-known professor and friend of ours – the nickname 'Shaman' stuck. Everyone would say to him, 'Shaman, come here,' or 'Shaman, go there.' So this was simply a matter of reaction. It does not mean that Mr Atsız was a 'Shaman'. Now people keep asking us: 'Didn't Atsız have any faith?' and so on. Atsız admired those who were 'religious', but took issue with those who were 'fundamentalist'. The difference between a 'religious person' and a 'fundamentalist' is this: a religious person is someone who believes in a faith, practises its requirements without telling anyone or making a show of it – in other words, someone who, when leaving their shop, doesn't say, *'I'm off to the mosque to pray,'* but says, *'I'll be back in ten minutes, sir*.' They pray for the sake of Allah. They fast. They give their zakat. If their circumstances allow, they go on the Hajj. They do not force anyone. Atsız never objected to any of this. He was simply angry with those who exploit religion—the so-called 'religious exploiters'. He asked, *'What do you buy from a simit seller? A "simit". So, is the "religious exploiter" the one who buys the religion or the one who sells it?'* He said that people call those who exploit religious sentiments—those who sell religion—'religious exploiters'. Mr Atsız was angry with such exploitative individuals.

– Thank you for your time.

ERK YURTSEVER

(26 August 2016, Istanbul)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I was born on 8 February 1934. I was born in a village called Erenköy. I think I started primary school at the age of seven and finished at twelve. There was a secondary school in Kadıköy. The third year of secondary school was at Yel Değirmeni; after completing that there, I went on to Haydarpaşa High School, which had been extended to a four-year programme after 1950, and I completed my secondary education there in four years. I also attended a Commerce School and graduated from there; after that, I completed my military service, and then I entered the workforce.

– Could you tell us about your studies?

– My studies were quite varied. When I say 'varied', I mean that at the age of 16 I learnt the Ottoman alphabet by heart. I began to read it. But there was no obligation to do so. No one told me, 'You must learn this.' When Nihal Atsız's connection with Haydar Paşa High School was severed in 1952—at that time, our schools had a subject called 'seminars'—we would attend those seminars to listen once more to distinguished lecturers and fellow students. Naturally, as was our custom, we always attended Mr Atsız's seminars. However, after Mr Atsız was abruptly removed from the school, we had a teacher named Mahir İz. Mr Mahir İz was a figure mentored by Mehmet Akif,

A wonderful person… But he's very passionate about literature. That day, I went to his seminar. At the end, I went over to him. He didn't recognise me at all. *"Sir, I'm keen on literature. But I can't really get hold of most of the works I've read. That's because very few of them have been translated into modern Turkish. That's why I'd like to learn the old script," I* said. *'All right, come and see me on 15 June and I'll teach you,'* he said. On 15 June, we went to see Mr Mahir. Mr Mahir taught me the old script in three lessons. He even said, *'Write a letter.*' So I wrote him a letter. We wrote it with great difficulty, of course. After the third lesson, naturally, I said, *"Next week…" "There's no next week; the lessons are over,"* he said. *"Well, what's going to happen then?"* I asked. *"Now go to the second-hand book market, buy a book in the old script from there, and start reading."* I went to the second-hand book market and bought a handwritten book. I brought it home. My mum and my grandmother knew the old script. They couldn't read it. Or rather, they could read it but didn't understand it. It turned out the book I'd bought was in Arabic. Anyway, I took it back to the second-hand bookshop and said, *'Give me something simpler.'* He had a book by Tevfik Fikret called *__Şermin__*, and the letters in it were beautifully written. *'Read this,'* he said. We read it; even though we didn't particularly like Tevfik Fikret, that's how I learnt. Apart from that, I became fascinated by calendars. Apart from that, we did a great deal of work on Turkish nationalism. For the most part, I never strayed from what the late Atsız Hoca said. I can summarise it briefly like that.

– How did you come to meet Atsız Bey?

– My meeting with Mr Atsız went like this: I studied under Mr Atsız for two years. I think the first year was 1950. In that first year, they had sent our soldiers to Korea. When those men were sent to Korea, naturally everyone was sad and pondering the situation. I also asked the Hoca—they call him Atsız or a Turkist—*'If the Hoca is a Turkist, what are we then?'* and so on.

But in the second year, that whole thing disappeared. Because in the summer of that second year, the Hoca was constantly on my mind, and I was feeling sorry for myself, wondering why I'd done such a thing. I wasn't actually doing anything. I wasn't being disrespectful, though. Then, in the second year, I got a bit closer to the Professor. In the first semester of 1952—back then, secondary schools had three semesters—I got up and went to his house in Maltepe. At the time, I was living in Bostancı. I set off, but what was I going to say? He'd ask, 'Why have you come?' or 'Is there something the matter?' I knocked on the door. The Professor opened it and said, *'Ooooh, welcome, Poet.'* He used to call me *'Poet'*. Anyway, we went inside. Then he showed me round his house. After that, we had quite a long chat. I realised he was a veritable fountain of knowledge. I never underestimated him, but I was in that sort of mindset where I thought, 'If he's a nationalist, then so are we,' and so on. I was still a lad. I was 17 or 18 years old.

– Did Mr Atsız teach your one-to-one lessons at Haydar Paşa High School?

– Yes. There were Literature and Composition lessons for two years, and Mr Atsız was the teacher for both.

(At this point, Mr Erkin Yurtsever, the son of Mr Erk Yurtsever, interjects.)

Erkin Yurtsever: – Mr Atsız was also the one who chose my name. He was the one who named me.

Erk Yurtsever: **–** I experienced that adventure in my second year, but I was so excited that at one point my eyes welled up. I don't really know how to cry, either. It was a Saturday or Sunday; we sat there for three or four hours. Then we parted ways and went home. After we got home, there's a friend of mine – we sit next to each other – called Altan Deliorman; the two of us are neck and neck in both literature and composition. In the first term, he told me

a 9 in literature and another 9 in composition, whilst Altan had been given a 10 in both. I asked the Professor, '*Why are you doing this*?' He replied, *'I only give that top mark—the 10—to Turkish nationalists. I'm happy to give a 9 to anyone who knows their literature, but I reserve the 10 for Turkish nationalists.*' It was a lovely bit of humour. That's how we got to know each other.

– What sort of person was Mr Atsız as a teacher? What was his attitude in class?

– Actually, the answer to the question 'What was he like?' is this: he'd asked for our names when he first came into the class. He asked for our fathers' names, but he didn't write them down anywhere. He kept them in his mind. Then, whilst we were at secondary school, there were pupils who'd come to us from other schools. For example, I don't know, some had come from Boğaziçi Secondary School, others from Anadolu Secondary School. Many of those who'd come that way were rather rough-and-ready sorts. He'd give us all nicknames. He'd call me *'The Poet*'. He'd call one of them *'Haçapulos*'. So he'd give us all sorts of nicknames.

– Did he give Mr Altan Deliorman a nickname?

– I never really got round to giving him a nickname. Because after I'd visited Mr Atsız, my classmate was sitting to my right. I said, *'I've done something, but let's not make a fuss about it.' 'What is it?'* he asked. When I said*, 'I went to Atsız's house during the half-term,'* he was a bit taken aback. He was surprised, so I explained exactly what had happened. However, although Altan was a friend I trusted, he'd told his own friend—there's a saying, isn't there: 'A secret is kept with one person; it isn't told to a second.' One day during break time, we were in Atsız Hoca's lesson. There's a long corridor. The corridor was about 100 metres wide and 200 metres long. It was that sort of corridor… We were playing backgammon there. My friends were curious—backgammon is a Persian game,

and why we were playing it. Well, what could we do? When Erk went into the classroom, he asked, *'Sir, is backgammon a national game?'* I was a bit reluctant, mind you; perhaps if I'd asked him this on my own, he might have said something, but when I asked it in front of the class, he said, *'A nation that has been playing this game for 600 years can now be considered to have a national game.'* There was one more thing he didn't tell me. There was something on my mind. *'Sir, in that case, why are the numbers in Persian rather than Turkish?'* He laughed. *'If the Turks had stayed in Iran for another 50 years, there wouldn't be a language called Persian,' he* said. I'd also act as a go-between for my friends on things they didn't know. I didn't take any pride in that, mind you. I'm quite curious myself. Backgammon certainly isn't a Turkish invention. Whenever something like that came up, my friends would turn to me.

– What was Mr Atsız's demeanour like in his lessons?

– He taught his lessons very calmly. You could listen to him speak very comfortably and understand him. You know, there are some teachers who speak so quickly that you can't make out what they're saying. He wasn't like that; he explained things slowly and spoke at a steady pace. Every now and then he'd ask the pupils a question. He didn't ask me much, as I was rather keen on literature, and we were studying Divan Literature that year, so he didn't ask me much. His manner of speaking was very proper. When he entered the classroom, he'd go straight to the lectern, greet us all, and then begin the lesson. There was no frivolity in the lesson anyway. We held him in high regard. If we had a question, we'd ask it timidly, swallowing hard. That was the atmosphere in the classroom. He'd even give those of foreign origin names befitting their surnames, such as *'Agop's Son*'.

– Did Mr Atsız discuss politics in class?

– No. After all, we discussed Turkish nationalism from A to Z. He didn't specifically focus on Turkish nationalism. When he

taught us Divan literature, we started with the epics. In fact, from the epics

Once we got started, the subject turned to Ergenekon and suchlike. We began learning various poems, starting with some from early Turkish Divan literature. But his aim there was simply to pass on what he knew to us. I had a yellow notebook. I would write down what he said in that yellow notebook; there are some phrases in it. I mean, really interesting things. I'd write them down straight away, whichever page of the notebook I happened to be on. Then, as it was a yellow notebook, the whole thing turned completely yellow. So I took it and, to prevent it from fading, I compiled what he'd said into a book in my own handwriting. He wasn't angry or anything, but let me briefly tell you one of his stories. In a composition class, he set the Göktürks as the topic for a student in the third year of secondary school. We were a mixed class of boys and girls… That year, girls had come from other secondary schools for the first time. One of the girls was writing, and the teacher read it out: *'My dear*,' *he said, 'you've written well, but you've written the first "k" in the word "Göktürk" as a "t". 'Why did you write it like that?'* he asked. The girl replied*, 'I did it on purpose…'* Professor Atsız became very angry. He failed the girl in that subject. At that time, if a student failed Literature, they could not progress to the next year, even if they had passed all their other subjects. That's the sort of man he was. If a student didn't know the answer, he'd open their exercise book and say, *'A nice, round, plump zero*.' Then he'd say, *'Failatün failatün failün*.' He'd give the student a zero and send them back to their seat. Even then, he was full of humour.

– Do you have any interesting memories of Atsız Bey?

– Honestly, there are so many memories that if I were to write them down, it would make a novel. However, I've never taken any interest in writing memoirs. I've noticed that a person who writes memoirs is not praising the other person but rather themselves. Everything I've told you seems to be all about me. This makes me uncomfortable. Apart from this particular encounter, there were other friendly gestures we made towards one another. For example, one time, in 1952, we went to clean Fatih's Tomb. I, Atsız Hoca, Bedriye Atsız,

Altan Deliorman, Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, İsmail Hakkı Danişmend and perhaps a few others were there.

– Were Nejdet Sançar and his wife there?

– No. We went to the mausoleum, and a man came out; *'Why have you come?'* he asked. *'We've come to clean it,'* said one of the Hocas. *'It's forbidden to enter here,'* said the man. But before that ban was imposed, the state had opened the mausoleums so they could be cleaned and looked after. We managed to get the man to open the door with great difficulty. It was the first time in my life I'd seen a vacuum cleaner there. When we held the vacuum cleaner over that green cloth, the black dust turned the cloth green. It was that dusty. That day, for example, was an unforgettable day – a rather amusing one.

– Whose idea was it to clean Fatih's Tomb?

– He was working at the Süleymaniye Library. But he was still keeping in touch with his old friends. One day he said to Altan, *'We're going to clean the mausoleum on such-and-such a day. Take Erk along too.'* When the news reached me, of course I was ready the day before. We got up and went. There was plenty of banter too. There was a poem by Abdülhak Hamit called **'Visiting Fatih's Tomb**'. It was this huge, glazed piece—a poem four metres long, running from top to bottom. That came to light. They were swept up with a vacuum cleaner. The funniest part of it all was that, as I mentioned just now, it was the first time in my life I'd ever seen a vacuum cleaner.

Our Erkin was born in 1959. On the evening of the day he was born, I went to see Atsız Hoca. *'Hoca*, *I'm going to name the child, but I'm undecided,' I* said. *'Let his name be Erkin,' he* said. Then Orkun was born. I went to Atsız's house again. I asked for his opinion on what to call him. *'To be honest, I'm fed up with this naming business. You name him; don't drag me into it,'* he said. So I named him Orkun too.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's literary work?

– Honestly, what can I say, my dear son? He would have written it flawlessly in modern Turkish. In 1999 or 2000, a teacher in Izmir found Atsız's defence in a bookshop, written in his own handwriting. He let us know. We collected money amongst ourselves. The man was asking for 500 lira. We sent the 500 lira. The book arrived. The *Mü-dafaa* had been published elsewhere too, but I didn't trust it, thinking there might be something else to it. I translated it from the old script into modern Turkish. This is one of my publications. It was published. There's no possibility of spelling mistakes—neither in the old script nor in the modern one. He translated the ***Aşıkpaşazade** History*. It's a marvellous work… He translated it by adapting it to modern Turkish. It was the same with his novels. His novels were absolutely flawless.

Erkin Yurtsever: **–** Dad, you used to joke about measuring my skull – why don't you tell us that story too?

Erk Yurtsever: – Now Yağmur has grown up and become a big man. In the early 2000s, he set about writing something about his father. *'My father would measure the skulls of visiting guests and tell them which race they belonged to,'* he says. So, when I first met Mr Atsız, he must have been a man of about 45 or 46. I went to his house. Those visits to his house became a weekly affair. Then we started going there with friends as well. Anyway, one day we said to Atsız, *'We've heard you have a device that measures people's heads and tells them their race.'* He started laughing and said, *'That's a device for measuring women's pregnancies.'* It turns out that back in those days, they used that device to measure women's pregnancies. Think of it like a compass; if the compass was opened to a certain number of centimetres, they'd make something up about it. They took it seriously. They tried to make

fun of it quite a bit, but it was a success

. They had such a mischievous streak. It was fastened from the belly upwards. The professor would put it on his head.

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's role as a historian?

– Atsız Bey's historical perspective is excellent. One day he was writing about the kings who came from Tanrıkut Mete's time onwards. His claim is this: from the Saka onwards, from 1700 BC onwards, by whom was the Turkic race ruled? In that work, he writes about Motun. Motun's state collapsed in AD 200. After that, the Saka people resumed governing the state. They ruled for 200 years, then in the 4th and 5th centuries the Göktürks took control. The story continues from there.

Mr Altan rang me. He said, *'Ask the Professor. I don't think there was a period called the Saka.'* Rather than whether one believes it or not, what matters is who ruled the Turks. So, it seems there must have been some research done back then, which is why Altan said, *'I don't believe this…'* and so on. I do believe it. It's impossible for the Professor to be wrong. We couldn't ask him anything. Everything that came out of his mouth—I don't know, it was just so valuable. He'd say something, and I'd write it down straight away in that yellow notebook.

– Are you thinking of publishing those notes?

– No, no.

– What comes to mind when you hear the names Atsız Bey and 'Turkish nationalism'?

– If Atatürk had read his works, the entire Republic of Turkey would have been Turkic nationalist. Atatürk was, of course, the President. Even during his presidency – and he was a Turkic nationalist himself – even he wasn't as much of a Turkic nationalist as Atsız. Last

Erkin posted something on Facebook the other day. In 1937, an advertisement was placed in a newspaper for the recruitment of staff at the Veterinary School in Ankara. The qualifications published in Cumhuriyet newspaper listed 'being of Turkish race' as the first requirement.

Again, in 1940, whether it was GATA or other military schools, the family backgrounds of the young recruits were investigated. Back then, groups like FETÖ couldn't have got in. Even if they had, police officers would have followed up, checking this and that; if any irregularities were found, the young person would be expelled. They would have been expelled from Kuleli and the like. As for the person who stated this as the first criterion, it could only have been Atatürk. In other words, consider that the first requirement for the Veterinary School was to be of Turkish race.

– Did Atsız Bey have any other distinctive traits?

– There was nothing unusual about it. By 'nothing', I mean that he gave direction to my life. I loved him dearly. He loved me dearly too. After the Turkish Language Association was founded, in 1964, the Professor was getting tired. *'Let's move the Association to Ankara,' he* said. Three or five of our friends objected to this. They insisted that the headquarters should remain here. Nevertheless, as the Professor was worn out—he must have been about 58 or 59 at the time—the Turkish Language Association was moved to Ankara. Those who opposed the move resigned from the association. I didn't do anything. I couldn't have done anything even whilst I was here anyway. I'm in the thick of working life anyway. Running here and there. That's why I can't say that if Atatürk had discovered him, Atatürk might have imposed much harsher conditions on the soldiers.

– What was Mr Atsız's daily life like at home?

– Let me put it this way. Every Sunday, we'd all turn up at his house. I was a regular visitor. Friends would come round. He had

a sense of humour, too. At that time, Mustafa

Kafalı and Sevgi Kafalı were studying in the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts. Mustafa Kafalı was telling Atsız Hoca about Sevgi. *'Well, if that's the case, take the girl…'* he said. Sevgi is from Adana. So, when he was in a good mood, he'd be like that… One day we went along, and he'd be shuffling people about—assigning this one here, that one there—as if he were forming a cabinet once he'd come to power. It was Mustafa Kafalı's turn. He said, *'I've made you the Mufti of Konya.*' Mustafa took offence and stayed sulking for about three months. He'd say to one person, 'I've appointed you to the Ministry of the Interior,' and to another, 'I've appointed so-and-so to such-and-such a post.' He had jokes like that.

– What task did he give you?

– I don't remember. He didn't give me a task; perhaps he did, I don't know, I can't remember.

– Which foreign languages did Mr Atsız know?

– He knew Persian. He knew enough Arabic to understand it. But I don't know which other foreign languages he knew. Anyway, I've never had any proper command of English in my life. I used to think that once Turkish started being taught in England, that's when I'd learn it. I had a few quirks that I might describe as amusing.

– Did you attend Mr Atsız's funeral?

– Of course. The funeral prayer was to be held; as far as I recall, it started at afternoon prayer time. It was at the Osman Ağa Mosque in Kadıköy, and there's quite a distance from there to Karacaahmet. The coffin wasn't put in a car or anything; it was carried on people's shoulders. Traffic wasn't as heavy back then. We set off in pursuit, but by the time we got there, we were at the very back of the procession, so we didn't get to see the burial. But afterwards, I wrote a poem called **'Visiting Mr Atsız's Grave**'. I

also added the date.

regarding the date of his death. God willing, I published his own defence in his own handwriting. I have a photocopy of the handwritten document. The original remained with Altan. When Altan died, his son Bozkurt was selling that dear library by the kilo.

– Could you elaborate a little on the matter of adding the date?

– I've made two mistakes on this matter. It's a poem. I even wrote something about it on Facebook. When I altered the date, although I knew that 'Kürşad' is spelled with a 'd', I wrote it with a 't' – every letter has a significance. The date 1395—the exact year of his death—comes up. I did this knowingly. Altan published it. If you read the second edition of **Atsız**'s book, **which I'm familiar with**, you'll find differences from the first. First of all, he wanted to include that poem as well. I said, *'Well, what's the point?'* He'd included it anyway.

During the 1960 coup, a statement was being read out on the radio. I thought, 'This must be Türkeş's voice.' I'd never heard it before. There were no telephones back then either. The nearest telephone was 200–300 metres away. I went and rang the Professor. *'Professor, that voice must be Türkeş's,'* I said. 'That's *right, it was Türkeş's voice,'* he said. I wrote a poem for him too. It was a poem about the Grey Wolf. The word 'Başbuğ' appeared in it. Atsız Bey said, *'Yes, that's the Başbuğ.'* Of course, he regretted it later. At the 1969 Adana Congress, Türkeş's group suggested we make a flag with three crescents. However, our view there was that it should be a Grey Wolf flag, but they dismissed that idea. But Atsız Bey didn't hold a grudge. He didn't take offence at anyone, in other words. In fact, in 1971, ***Orkun*** **magazine** was being published in Ankara. He wrote an article titled **'Nine Lights**' for the second issue of *Orkun*. Türkeş, of course, took that article as well.

– What would you like to say about the '44 Case'?

– If I were to say anything about the '44 Case', I was in Year 4 or 5 of primary school when the '44 Case' was heard.

That year, I was boarding at Işık High School. A caretaker came into the classroom and called me out; I stood up. *'They want you at the headmaster's office,'* he said. We went to the headmaster's office. There were three men there, all of whom were clearly high-ranking bureaucrats… They chatted about this and that. *'Are you happy at school?'* they asked. One of them asked, *'Did Uncle Nihal Atsız ever come to your house?'* I'd never heard the name Nihal Atsız in my life until that day. Actually, I'd read Atsız's novel *The **Death of the Grey Wolves*** in 1941–42 in a Turkish nationalist children's magazine called ***Ateş Çocuklar*** [81]. I'd read half of it there, but when the magazine closed down, it was left unfinished. Despite that, I couldn't remember *his* name. I was surprised; the fact that it was both 'Nihal Atsız' and 'uncle' surprised me even more. *"Did he come?" he* asked. *"I wouldn't know," I* said. "I *don't even know him…" I* said. It turns out that after the '44 trial, they'd brought these people to Tophane Prison. They'd set off from there. My father was also anti-Semitic. Since he was anti-Semitic, I automatically sided with my father; the Germans felt closer to me. I'd drawn a picture. German aeroplanes were sinking a Russian ship below. They were suspicious of it. They sent an inspector to me, thinking his father might be part of Atsız's group. Nothing came of it in the end.

– Have you met Mrs Bedriye?

– I have, just to give an example. Mrs Bedriye's husband, Mr Atsız, had at least ten guests every week. For these ten guests, there was a foster daughter called Kaniye; Kaniye would do this and that to entertain them, but Mrs Bedriye was never to be seen. Back then, Saturdays were also working days

81 According to an article by Ahmet Bican Ercilasun in the Yeniçağ newspaper dated 8 October 2017, this magazine is called Ateş and was published by Tahsin Demiray in November 1936. The magazine also bears the note 'For Children'. For this reason, it is referred to as Ateş Children.

She was there. If Bedriye Hanım was not to be seen, it was because if she was going to school, she wouldn't be seen in the morning anyway, nor would she be seen in the afternoon. We usually went on Sundays. Being the wife of such a person requires a bit of effort. Her husband should take her somewhere, have a cup of tea with her and have a chat. The late Atsız never paid any attention to that. Bedriye Hanım was his second wife. Later, at the beginning of 1975, he divorced her too. They didn't receive the court notice, but it was later obtained by a friend. He began corresponding with a woman called Adile Ayla – I think she was in Rome – but there was nothing romantic in his letters. There are no phrases like 'I loved you' or the like. Nor are there any such phrases in the letters his wife wrote in response. But to understand Atsız's state of mind, it is enough to read the novel *__Ruh Adam__*. In it, he is actually describing himself. It's a wonderful book. If that book had been translated into other languages, the translator wouldn't have understood what it was about anyway. Secondly, they'd sit and wonder how such a man could have written such a book. In short, what I'm trying to say is this: at that time, that book would have won the Nobel Prize, and no further book would have been written about him.

– In the book, Selim Pusat has a close relationship with Güntülü. Is there such a situation in real life as well?

– It happened.

– Who was Güntülü in real life?

– Don't ask so many questions.

– Who were the characters in that novel based on in real life?

– Now, Mr Altan had written something on that subject. He had analysed the characters in that novel. Certain parallels had been drawn. When Atsız wrote *__Ruh__ Adam* at that time, his home's

. She was a student at Erenköy High School, in her final year. I suppose he'd fallen for that girl. Mind you, I say 'I suppose'—I'm not stating it as a fact. It wasn't a romantic relationship where he'd say, 'Oh, I loved you so much…' and so on. It was a human connection. He might have said, 'I wish I'd married her for my third marriage,' but the gap between them was so vast that it was impossible. All the names mentioned there are made up.

– Have you met Mr Atsız's children?

– I had the chance to meet them, but I didn't. Because Yağmur is 5 or 6 years younger than me. Buğra is also 12 years younger than me. I believe Atsız's children graduated from the German High School. He was very involved with his children.

– Could Bedriye Hanım's reason for leaving be described as a lack of interest?

– Mrs Bedriye went to Germany. After she left, she didn't contact her husband much. Although Mr Atsız asked her to come back once or twice, she didn't. She then applied to the court, and the court granted the divorce.

– Did you ever meet Nejdet Sançar?

– We met Nejdet Sançar once or twice. We got to know him, but we were closer to Nejdet Sançar's wife. Because Mr Nejdet died a year before Mr Atsız. Later, we got to know Aunt Reşide. We'd go and kiss her hand at festivals and such. One day, we went on a holiday visit with a group of friends. Whilst chatting, the conversation turned to Türkeş. Naturally, we regard Türkeş as a hero. Mr Atsız had also written an article about Türkeş. Mr Atsız and Mrs Reşide lived in Bostancı. One of the friends had never

I'll never forget it, he said: *'Professor, what do you think of Türkeş?'* Mrs Reşide replied: *'If Türkeş hadn't been involved in the coup, he'd be just another Eminsu today*[82]*.'*

– Was there any difference or similarity between Atsız Bey and Nejdet Sançar?

– The difference between Atsız Bey and his brother was this: Atsız Bey was born in 1922, I believe, and Nejdet Bey was growing up alongside him. Nejdet Bey would ask his elder brother questions. Atsız would say, *'Here is a work by Rıza Nur; read this and come back, then we'll talk.'* He would read it and see that his elder brother was on the right path, so he would join him. I had more opportunities to meet and converse with Reşide Hanım, his wife, than with Nejdet Bey himself. In our conversations, whenever she spoke of Atsız Bey, she would refer to him as *'my brother*'. Indeed, the house to which Atsız Bey moved in Bostancı was a flat-style property built on a plot of land inherited from Reşide Hanım's ancestors, in exchange for a share of the building. Reşide Hanım was more warm-hearted and talkative.

– Mr Atsız's religious views are also much debated. What are your thoughts on this matter?

– I shall describe him in two words, or perhaps with three examples. One is that Atsız Bey says of Islam*, 'It is the religion of my people; it must be respected*.' Secondly, he wrote an article in which he explains the meaning of certain verses from **the Holy Qur'an**. In the verses we're discussing, Allah says to Muhammad: *'I swear by…*' In 17–18 places, God takes an oath. The teacher used to repeat this often. He didn't speak much, but he explained it to us. *'Why would Allah take an oath? Allah is God Himself, so that means there is someone greater than Him who is standing against Him*

82 'Eminsu' is the name given to soldiers purged from the army following the

1960 coup.

is swearing an oath. This business of swearing oaths is not from the Qur'an; it *is something Muhammad made up in his own head."*

– What were Mr Atsız's eating and drinking habits like?

– A friend of mine said, *'Take me to Atsız.*' So I took him. On the way, we thought we shouldn't go empty-handed. We bought a 35'lik. We went. The Professor drank that raki with us. There was a story behind it too. Muzaffer Eriş found a bottle of whisky somewhere. He took it to the Professor. They sat down and drank the whisky. Normally, whisky is a much stronger drink than raki… Anyway, they got quite tipsy, and they rang a friend—I can't remember his name now, he was about our age. *'Do you know what we're up to right now?'* they asked. *'I don't know,'* replied the friend on the other end. When they told him they'd been drinking whisky, he said, *'Drink to your heart's content…'* So, as far as I can tell, he wasn't a drunkard, but he did have the occasional drink. We never went to a pub with him.

– What was Mr Atsız like in terms of his temperament?

– If something was against Turkishness, he'd tear the person to pieces with his pen. If it was an article praising Turkishness, he'd read that too. He wouldn't scold or get angry with anyone. He wasn't like that. Apart from the girl at the secondary school I mentioned, I can't recall anything like that.

– Did you know that Mr Atsız was offered a seat in parliament?

– Yes. I was the one who prevented that too. In the 1965 elections, Mr Süleyman Demirel had come. They were looking for a parliamentary candidate. He said, *'Speak to him; if he accepts, let's put him forward as a parliamentary candidate from Kütahya.'* We had no idea about this. He rang Altan. *'Bring Erk along and come to us,'* he said. We met up with Altan that evening. We went to his house at around 8.00 pm.

"Lads, I've received an offer from Süleyman Demirel. What do you think?" he said. Altan was the first to speak. *"Sir, your presence there would be very beneficial for the cause of Turkism. At the very least, you'd raise awareness among people there regarding Turkism,"* he said. But I didn't say a word; I just kept quiet. Altan was doing all the talking. Mr Atsız was replying to him, but it was eating away at me inside. The meeting ended around 10.30 pm. Just as we were about to leave through the door, he said, *'You didn't say a word…' 'What was I supposed to say, Professor?'* I asked. *'What would you have me say? What business do you have amongst those brave sons of brave men?'* I said. *'Your party leader will say we should grant autonomy to the Kurds; everyone will raise their hands, and you'll raise yours with them. You've got no choice.'* Whatever he was thinking after I spoke, he rang me two or three days later. *'You're right. What business do I have in the '65 elections?'* he said. It's fair to say he didn't like politics at all.

– What would you say about the rumours that Mr Atsız was in dire financial straits and wrote his novels whilst wearing a coat?

– I don't know about that.

– Do you have any information about the book Atsız was working on but which subsequently disappeared?

– That business with the book is a very strange affair. If you're going to see the Saruhanoğlu brothers, they know the truth of the matter. As far as I know, whilst he was on his sickbed, Refet Körüklü and Muzaffer Eriş went to visit him. He'd already had a seizure on the tenth of the month. Whilst they were chatting about this and that, Mr Atsız said, *'The history book is finished. It's in the bag…"* Now ask the Saruhanoğlu brothers. Anyway, afterwards, Muzaffer Bey said, 'I'd better be off now.' He got up. Refet Bey is also a bit of a devout man. He began reciting the Yasin. Atsız said*, 'Read on, Refet, read on; it does me good.'*

he says. Now, it's not my habit to say 'yes' to things I haven't witnessed myself. The man was already in a trance, anyway. Mr Refet told us this story several times.

– Hasan Şahmaran Bey was there at the time as well. He told me about it too.

– I don't know. Refet Körüklü didn't mention his name.

– Yücel Hacaloğlu told me that Altan Bey and Buğra Atsız Bey had gone to meet with a publisher regarding the printing of this work. Altan Deliorman had told him this. Did Altan Bey mention this incident to you?

– They didn't tell me. Whilst Nezih Bey was writing the novel, his brother Erdoğan Bey, Abdulhalûk Çay, and another person whose name I can't recall were there. These lads would come to Atsız. Atsız Bey was transcribing the lost **'History of the Turks'** book from the old script into the new script, and these lads were typing it up. The Professor kept warning them: *'Look, if you get even a single comma wrong, I'll ring your bell,*' he'd joke from time to time. But the day before he died, when Refet Bey and Muzaffer Eriş went to see him, he said, *'The history book is finished. It's right there.'* After Atsız died, the book went missing. As far as I recall – I can't remember if Bedriye Hanım came here – Yağmur and Buğra came to their father's funeral, and the book went missing after that day. Later, the book was supposedly found; Erdoğan was working in printing at the time. He was the first to publish Atsız Bey's complete works. They spoke to Erdoğan, and he said, 'I'll print that book.' 'All right,' say Buğra and Yağmur. Erdoğan says, *'I'll print *Turkish History* as well.*' *'All right, but that one's missing,'* they say. *'How can it be missing?'* he asks. *'It's just missing…'* they say. They don't bring it. But apparently the book had been typed using the new alphabet. One day, Osman Fikri Sertkaya asked Bedriye

. He asks her about the book. She says, *'It's in the bedside table in the bedroom*.' Osman goes, opens it and looks – the book really is there. This is something witnessed by a single person… Osman Fikri Sertkaya recounted this in 2001.[83] I know he wrote it, but I've never seen the book.

I suggested to one of the Saruhanoğlu brothers that we organise a meal here. Let's say 20 people turn up. Let these 20 people tell us their stories one by one. Perhaps we'll come across a clue – this was about five or six years ago. However, after Atsız's death, they made no attempt to do so. Even if they had tried, they wouldn't have found it. But my view is this: these two brothers cannot agree on the copyright. The book is either with Yağmur or with Buğra… That's my opinion.

– What are your thoughts on the growing interest in Mr Atsız and the publications appearing about him?

Hayri wrote a book. I bought the book Hayri Bey wrote. However, there are certain stories in Hayri Bey's book that do not belong to Atsız. We have a friend called Sami Yavrucuk. He hears in Istanbul that Atsız has died and comes over to the area of Osman Ağa Mosque. But he does not attend the funeral. So, just as the funeral procession was setting off, people were walking away. He followed behind them. He recounts this. This incident is described in the book. At one point, the headmaster says, *'If I'd come, they would have reported me*.' Who on earth would report someone at a funeral? You might have just come out of the afternoon prayer.

Another incident involves Sait Bilgiç, the MP for Isparta. In 1952, Sami Bey went to see him and received money, which made Atsız angry.

83 After this meeting, I read this paragraph to Osman Fikri Sertkaya. He explained that he'd had this conversation not with Bedriye Hanım, but with Buğra Atsız, and that Buğra Atsız had shown him Atsız Bey's notes, which were on the chest of drawers, and that—as he'd mentioned in his own interview—there was no completed work in the offing. It is likely that Erk Bey recalled this incident as having taken place with Bedriye Hanım.

No such incident took place. Sami Bey was with someone else—I cannot recall his name at the moment. They were getting on the train and arriving. Sami Bey said to Sait Bey, *'Sir, we cannot pay the rent; might we be able to receive assistance from the secret fund?'* Mr Sait asks the clerk, *'How much is left of our money?'* The clerk replies that there are 40 lira left. Forty lira was a lot of money back then; you could buy a field for that. *'Let's set that aside for the Nationalists' Association,'* he says. The clerk replies, *'Let's consult our elders first, and then we'll come and see you.'* They board the train. They go to see Atsız. Atsız Bey lets them in. Sami Bey explains Sait Bey's proposal. He asks for his opinion. Atsız Bey says, *'Sami Bey, Sami Bey, when did you decide to sell out nationalism?'* I know Atsız Bey very well. He never scolds anyone in front of others. It's just that Mr Sami is saying these things here to make himself look good. May God have mercy on him – the other friends had such made-up stories too. I also mentioned this situation to Mr Hayri Yıldırım. But since he's already written it, we can't just tear those pages out and throw them away.

– That's all I have to ask. Is there anything else you'd like to say to conclude?

– What can I say? I'd just like to say, 'Welcome'.

– It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me.

– You're welcome.

NEZİH SARUHANOŠLU

(26 August 2016, Istanbul)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– My name is Nezih Saruhanoğlu; I was born in Istanbul in 1946. I am the son of a family of Rumelian migrants. On both my mother's and father's sides, we are counted amongst the 'Evlad-ı Fatihan'. We did not come from the Saruhan Principality. When Fatih Sultan Mehmet's father, Murad II, destroyed the Saruhan Principality, 10,000 families, including ours, were exiled to Rumelia. Later, when those lands were lost, we were forced to return. Of course, this was a huge blow; as a result, my father was also a soldier. I am the son of a soldier. Our sense of Turkish nationalism began right from infancy. I graduated from the Faculty of Dentistry at Istanbul University.

– How did you meet Mr Atsız?

– Whilst I was at secondary school and university—I was also studying at the Faculty of Dentistry at Istanbul University at the time—I had the privilege of meeting Professor Hüseyin Nihal Atsız. Whilst studying at Istanbul University, I was in constant contact with my professor. During Professor Atsız's lifetime, I was a founder of the Kadıköy Turkish Language Society. We established it together with Professor Abdulhalûk Çay. He served as chairman and I as vice-chairman. Through that connection, I frequently had

. He was a true leader. He was as Turkish as they come, fearing nothing. I can't think of anything else to say.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's literary work?

– He was a truly great poet… He lays everything bare in his poetry collection *__Yolların Sonu__*.

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's role as a historian?

– Of course, he showed us that Turkishness is not as the classical historians have portrayed it; in his books, *__The Death of the Grey Wolves__* and *The Resurrection of __the Grey Wolves__*, he took us back to our roots.

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's Turkish nationalism?

– Of course, those who do not know Mr Atsız are spreading all sorts of fabrications. Mr Atsız was as Turkish as they come and a Turkic nationalist. He was a symbol for all of us. He was our guiding star.

– During my interview with Muhiddin Nalbantoğlu, he kept mentioning the close bond you and your brothers had with Atsız. What was the reason for this closeness?

– As I said, he was our guiding star. He was a person we looked up to. Atsız Bey was an honest man; he was truthful, never told a lie, and was a very hard-working person. He embodied all the virtues of Turkishness. He was a very kind-hearted and helpful person. What can I say? There's no end to describing Atsız Hoca.

– Do you have any memorable moments from your time with Mr Atsız that have stayed with you?

– I used to see Atsız Hoca in Cağaloğlu, where we had our printing works. My brother Erdoğan was quite helpful in printing his ***Ötüken*** magazine and such. I always used to see him in Cağaloğlu. At that time, our elder brother Nalbantoğlu was also working in a large bookshop there. Atsız Hoca was always engrossed in books. He was a man concerned with reality, not fantasy.

– What were the different aspects you observed in Mr Atsız?

– Honesty, integrity, diligence...

– Did you ever visit Atsız Bey's home?

– Yes, I went to his home in Maltepe. It was a very simple Turkish home… He took an interest in people individually. He was a very gentlemanly man. He would ask after everyone's well-being. He was an ideal person.

– What was Mr Atsız's connection with young people like? As someone who was quite young at the time, what would you like to say?

– He loved young people dearly. He wanted to see them as *the Grey Wolves* of his dreams. That had an impact. He was also a joker and witty; for example, he used to call our Erdoğan 'Yamtar'. He'd call someone else 'Bulaç'. He'd give people nicknames like that. He wasn't a cold person at all. He was very warm.

– Did he give you a nickname?

As I'm a dentist, he used to call me *'Doctor'*. I didn't bother him too much anyway. Because at the time, the Professor was also working on his book on **Turkish History**. To avoid keeping him

occupied or disturbing him as much as possible, I kept my distance

just so he could finish that book, but unfortunately they destroyed that book.

– You have a medical background yourself, and Mr Atsız also left medical school halfway through. Did he ever talk to you about this, or confide in you?

I never had the chance to discuss those matters with him. But he took a great interest in me and was very fond of me. He used to call me 'Doctor'. We always talked about history and literature.

– Do you know which foreign languages Mr Atsız spoke?

– I don't know much about that. But I do know that he was familiar with various dialects of Turkish.

– Did you attend Mr Atsız's funeral?

– Yes. It was very crowded. I'd say the crowd was in a state of upheaval.

– What are your thoughts on the '44 Case'?

– As is well known, in the 'Case of 44', the true Turkish nationalists suffered greatly. A number of charlatans also latched onto the situation, claiming, *'We did this, we did that…'* in an attempt to line their own pockets. The Professor was a true fighter and warrior. He had even written an article on these Kurdish movements and ended up in prison at the age of 70. We also visited him twice at Doğancılar Prison.

– When you met him in prison, did he ever complain about his situation?

– No, he never complained. Because he was a fighter.

– Did you have the opportunity to meet Mrs Bedriye?

– I imagine the relationship between Mrs Bedriye and Atsız Hoca wasn't very good. She might have had a point, though – Hoca had always suffered, always been exiled, constantly. She went to Germany to save her children from this suffering. In Germany, she managed to protect her children to some extent. We, as Turkish nationalists, didn't much like Mrs Bedriye for leaving our Hoca alone.

– Do you know Atsız Bey's children?

– Not Yağmur, but I know Buğra quite well; we're on brotherly terms. I'm not saying anything about Buğra, but as for Yağmur—at that time, I'd been working in Germany for ten years. The statements he made to German television programmes back then must have made his father turn in his grave.

– What sort of statements did Mr Yağmur make?

– *'The Grey Wolves are enemies of Christians…'* and so on. *'Don't let them gain a foothold* here…' – he displayed this sort of behaviour that we couldn't bring ourselves to condone.

– Did you ever have the chance to meet Nejdet Sançar?

– Yes, he was also a man who followed in his brother's footsteps. He is one of our teachers as well.

– Was there any difference or similarity between the two brothers?

– I didn't get to see Mr Nejdet very often. But he was also very combative.

– Mr Atsız's religious side is much debated. What would you say on this subject?

– Everyone makes things up about Nihal Atsız Hoca. His field is literature and history. As it is not a matter of religion, we Turkists regard religion as a matter of conscience, our own internal affair, so we do not discuss it everywhere. Atsız Hoca did not speak about it much either.

– Do you have any information regarding the relationship between Atsız Bey and Türkeş?

– We are, in fact, Professor Atsız's students. When Alparslan Bey returned from exile, Professor Atsız said: *'Our political leader is Alparslan Bey. You will gather around him.'*

– Did Atsız Bey actually use those exact words?

– Yes. We went and joined the CMKP on his orders. At the first general assembly, we removed Osman Bölükbaşı and installed Alparslan Bey in his place. A few years later, Türkeş had Atsız Bey's books banned. This was because they had led Alparslan Bey to believe that votes could not be won through Turkism. Later, the party began to place greater emphasis on Islamic elements. We Turkists also began to take a stand. That was when he had the books banned.

– What can you tell us about Atsız Bey's eating and drinking habits? It is well known that he loved tea.

– He didn't eat much. He wasn't particularly fond of food. He was very moderate. He didn't like junk food.

– What would you like to say about the matter of the missing book? During my conversation with Mr Erk Yurtsever, he mentioned that you and your brothers might be able to provide information about this work.

– This book did exist. Because Erdoğan Saruhanoğlu, Adalet Ergenekon, Faruk Çil and Abdulhalûk Çay were always with Atsız Hoca. The Hoca had said the following about this book: *'May God grant me 15 more days of life so that I may write the foreword to the book,'* he used to say. His heart was giving him trouble.

– What happened to that book afterwards?

– They destroyed it. They destroyed this book on the day he died. I don't know who destroyed it.

– Did Mr Erdoğan manage to pick up any clues about this book whilst publishing the Atsız Collected Works?

– No, he didn't. In fact, there were rumours to the effect that *'this book is rather controversial, so the family will be making some adjustments…'* and so on.

– What are your thoughts on the growing interest in Mr Atsız in recent days and the works being published about him? Have you been able to keep up with them?

– Yes. Most of it is positive, but there are some negative comments too. There are people who know Atsız Hoca and those who don't. There are all sorts of baseless rumours about Atsız – that he was a racist, a phrenologist, religious, irreligious, and so on. As far as we know, Nihal Atsız was a true Turkish nationalist, an honest, upright, hard-working and kind-hearted man. Some people attribute all sorts of things to him. It's as if they're praising him, but they're doing nothing but slandering him.

– Is there anything else you'd like to say?

– Let me **just** say this**:** from the Technical University, Kazım Mir-şan and—I can't recall his first name—his surname is Çetin; both were influenced by Professor Atsız and produced some wonderful works. Atsız was their teacher too. Thank you for researching this topic.

– You're welcome. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me.

GÜNDOŠDU SARUHANOŠLU

(26 August 2016, Istanbul)

– How and when did you meet Mr Atsız?

– We knew him as a family; Nezih Abi and Erdoğan Abi took me to meet him whilst I was a student at Kuleli. Even in our childhood, we had *__The Death of the Grey Wolves__* and *__The Resurrection of the Grey Wolves__* in our hands.

I left the army in the year I graduated from the Army War College, following the 12 March 1971 military memorandum. My elder brother Erdoğan was Mr Türkeş's private secretary. I came to Istanbul and studied sociology afterwards. During this time, I served as managing editor of *__Ötüken__* magazine alongside Mr Atsız. We used to meet with Mr Atsız three or four days a week. I took part in many of his discussions. I remained by his side until the moment of his passing. I had first met Mr Atsız whilst I was a student at Kuleli. We knew him as our teacher. Apart from that, I would be present alongside him during his other discussions with visitors.

– Did your father know Mr Atsız as well?

– Yes. My father was also an officer. That's how we met.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's roles as a historian and literary figure?

– Of course, Mr Atsız was, as both a literary scholar and a historian, essentially
a man who embraced the school of Z. Velidi Togan, held a thesis on the continuity of Turkish history, and advocated that history should be interpreted according to its causes and consequences. That is, in fact, the story behind this 'lost book'. It was a text he had been preparing for many years. Until the text reached its final form, Abdulhalûk Çay and I worked together to have it typed out from Old Turkish into Modern Turkish.

– Apart from Abdulhalûk Çay and yourself, who else assisted Atsız Bey with this project?

– There were Adalet Ergenekon Çil, Faruk Çil, and my brother Erdoğan. My brother Nezih had gone to Germany that year. There was also Dr Tuncer, may he rest in peace.

– What exactly was the content of the book?

– The book was over 1,000 pages long; it was a very comprehensive work. There were actually two lost books. One was his autobiography; he had prepared his own autobiography. The other was on **Turkish history**. In fact, discussions were held regarding the publication of the book on **Turkish** history. I was present for these. We had a publishing house together with our uncle. Discussions took place regarding certain images to be used in the book.

– I heard about the autobiography for the first time.

– The autobiography was finished. It was on the desk on the day he died. We took a sheet from inside and tied it over the desk. Yağmur Abi and Buğra Abi came, and his wife arrived later. We

tied the sheet in a knot over the desk. Most of it was handwritten and lay on the desk…

– Had it all been typed up?

– No.

– Did you come across anything else related to that work later on?

– No, we haven't.

– What would you like to say about Mr Atsız's Turkic nationalist character?

– When it comes to Mr Atsız and Turkism, he was undoubtedly one of the greatest leaders of the Turkist movement of that era. In fact, he was the number one influence in the development of young Turkist nationalists. If you ask me, his first disciple was Hüseyin Feyzullah. [84] In other words, if you look into where Alparslan Türkeş came from in his later life, you will see Atsız Bey's influence. Whilst Türkeş was a second lieutenant, he wrote a letter to Atsız Bey during the '44 events. They found this letter whilst searching his home. After that, Alparslan Türkeş went to America, where he received an education; upon his return, he emerged as a political leader and as *the 'Mighty Colonel of the Revolution'*.

– Do you have any knowledge of the '44 Case'? Did you ever discuss this matter with Mr Atsız, Mr Türkeş or any of the other defendants?

– I spent a great deal of time with Mr Türkeş, but I never discussed this matter with him. As for Mr Atsız, on various occasions,

84 Alparslan Türkeş's real name is Hüseyin Feyzullah.

I was in my twenties at the time; we used to listen to his conversations. We would also ask him about certain topics we were curious about, with due respect. He would answer us. I am of the opinion that, regarding the events of '44, his close relatives did not stand firmly behind Mr Atsız. That is the impression I gained.

– Did you ever discuss Atsız with Mr Türkeş?

– No. When he was with us, Mr Türkeş always referred to Mr Atsız as *'Hocam*'.

– Did Mr Atsız, Mr Türkeş and you ever meet?

– Yes, I did. We were together at the time of Mr Nejdet Sançar's passing. I even opened the door. Yaşar Okuyan was there. We didn't like Yaşar Okuyan very much either. His view of Mr Atsız wasn't favourable either. For instance, a row broke out between us because he had accused Mr Atsız in connection with the 'Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Associations' case.

– Did Mr Atsız and Mr Türkeş speak at the funeral?

– Of course they did. But no political matters were discussed.

– Is there any interesting incident involving Atsız Bey that has stayed with you?

– Actually, every moment with him was interesting. He was a very modest man. He valued everyone and treated them with respect. He was a very level-headed person. Whether you were 20 or 50 years old didn't matter to him. He recognised character. For example, the first time I went to his home – it was in Maltepe – I saw a man standing there with curly, Jewish-style hair. I was quite astonished. I couldn't quite make sense of it, but he said, *'He's one of the Karaim Turks…'* In other words, a certain

We learnt these things too by living alongside Mr Atsız. Until then, I hadn't known that the Karaims were of Turkish origin. For example, at the time of Dr Hikmet Kıvılcımlı's death, he had said, *"Stand up for Dr Hikmet Kıvılcımlı. He may be a left-wing communist, but he is Turkish; not everything about him is internationalist.'* That, too, was a revelation for us.

– Did he attend Hikmet Kıvılcımlı's funeral?

– No, he didn't.

– In your view, what were Atsız Bey's distinctive traits?

– Atsız was a man who lived exactly as he thought. That was his most important trait. He never behaved in a political manner. He was straightforward and expressed his thoughts directly without hesitation. For example, there was an incident. We went to visit the Hoca in prison with Enver Yakupoğlu [85]. Çetin Altan had written a petition to Korutürk. He had requested a pardon due to his ill health. When Hoca arrived at the meeting place, Enver Yakupoğlu said, *'Hocam, I have some good news for you. Çetin Altan has written a petition to President Korutürk, and he is being pardoned.* I *have also prepared a petition for you.*' Mr Atsız, however, said, *'Mr Enver, how many years have you known me?'* When Mr Enver replied, 'Since such-and-such a date,' Professor Atsız said, *'You have never really known me. I am dismissing you from your role as my solicitor. How could you even think that I would seek a pardon for a crime I did not commit, and yet offer this to me?'* He had a very strong personality… He was a very principled man.

– At the end of this trial, he was once again released by the President's pardon.

– But he did not make such a request himself. They released him without any such request being made.

85 Enver Yakupoğlu is Atsız Bey's lawyer.

– You were one of those who visited Atsız Bey's home. What was discussed there? What was the atmosphere like? What was Atsız Bey like at home?

– At home, Mr Atsız was an extremely affectionate man. He was a joker, mischievous, and loved satire… For example, he had studied military medicine for a certain period. In the old days, there was a device, like a compass, used to monitor foetal development in pregnant women. He had one of those at home. They asked, *'Professor*, *what is that?'* The professor replied, *'Hold on*, *since you've asked*, *let me see if you're dolichocephalic or brachycephalic—I'll measure your skull* to see *if you're Turkish or not.'* Much of the 'Turkism–racism' narrative stems from that compass. In other words, it's an incident conjured up by those who couldn't take a joke.

– To what do you attribute the aspect of Atsız Bey that influenced young people?

– He lived exactly as he thought. You would never have found any inconsistency in the Hoca's life. Take Çetin Altan, for example: he presented himself as a left-winger, wrote articles, but led a capitalist lifestyle. I never saw any lavish meals or the like at the Hoca's home. He would sit at home, write his articles, write his books, and did not interact with many people. For instance, he did not like politics. Just as I know he never sought out politics, he did not look favourably upon the offers that came his way either. Offers were made even during those times when Mr Türkeş was not yet the leader, but Mr Atsız was a man who focused more on his books than on politics, striving to pass on his experiences.

– What would you say about the foreign languages Mr Atsız knew?

– I believe he knew Persian. He also knew Ottoman Turkish.

– Did you attend his funeral?

– Of course. The funeral was very well attended. I was at the very front, carrying his portrait. The funeral procession set off from the mosque in Kadıköy. We carried him on our shoulders all the way to his grave. There were around 6–7 thousand people there.

– Who gave you the task of carrying Mr Atsız's photograph?

– I took it upon myself. We were like his own sons.

– You also helped with the move when Mr Atsız's house was being moved.

– Of course, there were nine of us. Erdoğan Abi, myself, the dentist Feridun Azeri, Sami Abi, Faruk Çil and so on. My mother was due to have an operation that day. Instead of going to the hospital, we went to help move Mr Atsız's house. The Professor was very pleased that we went to help move the house rather than to the hospital that day. There was hardly any furniture in the Professor's house anyway. There was just one rocking chair. There were four or five chairs around the table. As we knew the state of the house from having spent 16 hours there that day, we didn't even see a set table. There were just some simple snacks. Tea was brewed. The library took up 95 per cent of the house. There was even a sign at the entrance. Descartes's words, *'All ye who enter here, abandon all hope,'* were displayed there. He'd had it printed and put up. He would stand at the head of those browsing the books in the library. He was very meticulous about that. There were a great many manuscripts. When it came to moving house, the professor's meticulousness meant it was impossible to hire outside help to carry the books. So he chose people he trusted implicitly. We carried them on our backs in crates. We moved them from Maltepe to the house in Bostancı. During the '44 events', they used to call each other *'Uncle'*; for instance, he would sometimes call us 'Uncle' too. He wrote an article titled **'The Nine Giants**'.

– Did he invite you to help move the house himself?

– No, as we knew the house was being moved, and knowing how meticulous the Hoca was on such matters, we said, *'We absolutely won't let anyone into the house. You'll show us where to put things, and we'll arrange them there.*'

I'm amazed. Everyone is sharing their memories of the Hoca. People I've never even seen in the Hoca's company are talking about him. The Hoca would never let anyone near him whom he did not approve of or whose opinion he did not value. He would not accept them. He would show his hospitality to those who came to visit. Now thousands of people are sharing memories of the Hoca, yet the people I've seen over the years can be counted on the fingers of one hand—no more than eighty or ninety. Whenever someone came, one of us would always be by the Hoca's side.

– Have you met Mrs Bedriye?

– After the Hoca passed away, I went to his house. As soon as Mrs Bedriye arrived, she wouldn't let anyone have any of the archives or photographs there. I went there, saying we were going to put together a programme, took some of the Hoca's photographs, made copies of them, and returned the originals. We met up five or six times after that. Buğra and I are still friends. But we never had any contact with Yağmur Abi.

– Did you ever speak to Mr Buğra about the missing book?

– We did. He was last in Turkey on 11 December (2015). The subject came up again here. Naturally, we wondered who might have taken it around that time. It's an event we've touched with our own hands and seen with our own eyes. It's not a figment of the imagination. I wonder if that

book taken and given to someone else in the family? We considered every possibility. Mr Buğra was in Germany at the time. For example, Mr Atsız was waiting for a letter from a German professor to tie up the end of the book. Even after he'd had a heart attack, he once said – back then, post offices didn't work like they do today – *'Gün-doğdu, could you pop down to the post office* and see *if a letter has arrived?'* I went to the post office to see if there was a letter for the Professor. That was about a day before his death… He even made a joke. *'For the first time, I'm asking something of Göktanrı. I'm asking for another fifteen days of life. Azrael is waiting there, but I'm going to finish this book,'* he said, lifting his mask from where he was lying and making a joke.

– Could he have sent a copy to the professor in Germany for him to see the work?

– No, no. The professor preferred handwritten manuscripts. That sort of thing isn't possible. Most of it was in note form. Abdulhalûk Çay was typing it up. The day after the funeral, Bedriye Atsız, Yağmur Atsız and Buğra Atsız said they hadn't seen this work.

– Did you meet Nejdet Sançar?

– Of course we did.

– Were there any differences or similarities between Mr Atsız and Mr Nejdet?

– He was a very idealistic man too. I used to complain. Nejdet Sançar and his wife—who were both teachers, at Gazi High School, I believe—were stricter with nationalist pupils in Ankara. He was very idealistic, saying that a nationalist ought to know these things better. He was witty, just like Mr Atsız. He was an athlete. Naturally, he was distressed when his son Afşın fell ill. After Afşın's death, they became a family in mourning. For example, every day at the table

, Afşın's place at the table was set for all three meals. Their lives were spent with Afşın and in his memory. We also spent time with Sançar Hoca. His wife was also a wonderful person.

– Atsız Bey's religious side is much debated. What are your thoughts on this matter?

– Religious topics were not often discussed in Atsız Bey's circle. Atsız Bey would criticise instances where religion was exaggerated. Personally, I never heard Atsız Bey say anything against Islam. Atsız Bey had a witty personality; he wrote an article about Noah's Ark, and I think people interpreted that incident as evidence of his irreligiousness. Of course, he was also completely opposed to Arab traditions and the like. The issues discussed today in the name of Islam were being discussed back then as well. Just as we think today, Mr Atsız would explain these matters in that way.

– It is said that Atsız Bey was in dire financial straits, and that he even wrote some of his novels whilst wearing a coat.

– Atsız Bey was a man who was exploited throughout his life. Certain publishing houses, which came forward claiming to be nationalists and whom he trusted, constantly pocketed the money relating to Atsız Bey's copyright; ***The Death of the Grey Wolves*** had 45 print runs, and I suspect they did not pay him for about 40 of them. Mr Atsız was a very modest man; he was not someone who was in great need of money. I do not believe his financial situation was dire. He was a man who entertained his guests, owed no one anything, and did not care for that sort of relationship. He lived his entire life free of debt and financial strain. He set aside only a very small portion of his salary for food expenses and donated the rest to Ötüken.

– There is growing interest in Mr Atsız these days. Many works are being written about him. What are your thoughts on this?

– Of course, we need to carry out very thorough research on Mr Atsız. We definitely need books that reflect Mr Atsız's personality and bring young people into contact with him. We need to understand Mr Atsız properly… We need to write works that bring his ideas to young people.

– That's all I have to ask. Is there anything else you'd like to say in conclusion?

– Everyone needs to get to know Mr Atsız very well. They need to understand him.

– Thank you.

– You're welcome.

PROF. DR. DURSUN YILDIRIM [86]

(18 December 2016)

– Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

– I grew up in Istanbul during my primary, secondary, high school and university years. When we moved from Rize to Istanbul in 1952, the first neighbourhood we lived in was the Muradiye neighbourhood in Beşiktaş. The house we rented was on Dere Street. After completing my primary and secondary education at Nilüfer Hatun Primary and Secondary School, I attended Kabataş Boys' High School and from there went on to study at the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Istanbul University. After graduating from this department, I enrolled in the PhD programme at the same university and began working on my thesis topic. One evening, a friend of mine, the late Fahrettin Oysul, rang me and told me that an assistant professorship examination had been announced at Hacettepe University. To cut a long story short, I sat the exam, passed it, and the course of my life turned towards Ankara; I have been living in Ankara ever since. I am a retired academic from Hacettepe University.

– When did you first meet Mr Atsız?

– Before I met Mr Atsız, I had become acquainted with his works. I really enjoyed reading his works on Turkish history and his historical novels; the adventures they recounted

86 Whilst I was in Ankara, I was unable to meet Prof. Dr Dursun Yıldırım in

person, so I asked my questions via the internet.

I felt as though I were right there within them. I didn't know where the Turkish Nationalists' Association was, but I bought the badge featuring the grey wolf howling from a rock and wore it on my lapel as I went about my business. During my secondary school years, an essay competition was organised following the death of Afşın, the son of the late Nejdet Sançar. I took part. Thus, my first piece was published in the **Yeni İstanbul** newspaper. I did not have the opportunity to meet Mr Atsız during those years. However, in 1962, I met two young men from Mr Atsız's circle because of the grey wolf badge on my lapel. Both of these young men, who have since passed away, were studying engineering at Maçka Technical College at the time. One of them was İbrahim Cemalî (Gökbörü), a Cypriot freedom fighter; the other was Abdurrahman Çelik (I later came to call him Tanrı-kulu Zeybekoğlu once we became friends). These friends, whom I loved dearly and spent so much time with, were in such a hurry that they mounted those beautiful horses and galloped off into the distance. May their souls rest in peace. In short, it seems I had to wait until my university years to meet Atsız Bey, who drew us into the world of his novels and transformed us into a part of that world, into one of its own.

– How did you meet Atsız Bey?

– I met Atsız Bey in 1963, during the years he was working at the Süleymaniye Library. As soon as I found out where he was working, I said to my friend Ahmet Bican Ercilasun, 'Let's go,' and we went together. I continued to visit him right up until he set off on his horse to the heavens.

– What are your thoughts on Mr Atsız's literary persona?

– There are two facets to Atsız Bey's literary creativity. The first was his poetry and the second his prose. Manliness, heroism, beauty, passion, camaraderie, loyalty, reliability and a deep connection to the past

affection and respect for the past, the resolve and determination to pursue one's ideals even when left alone, a passion for history and a defiance of the world—these were, I might say, the creative driving forces behind his poetry. There was a deep love of Turkishness in the aesthetics of his creativity. As for his historical novels, in each one he is present within the world he has created**.** In his work *__Ruh__ Adam*, however, he comes to terms with himself and his experiences. This work of his, like his others, is a world-class masterpiece. If the field of world literary criticism were to approach and evaluate literary creativity objectively, examining it through a non-ideological lens, the works he wrote, created and bequeathed to humanity would undoubtedly find their rightful place. However, each of his works continues to bestow upon him a reward unmatched by any other writer, having gone through hundreds of print runs.

– What would you like to say about Atsız Bey's character as a historian?

– As for his identity as a scholar, it is a well-known and widely appreciated fact that, whilst examining the subjects he addressed, he adhered meticulously to scientific criteria and sensitivity. Given that his works on Turkish history and philology are still utilised today, this serves as the most significant evidence of how rigorously his views and findings were presented in accordance with academic discipline.

– What comes to mind when you hear the names 'Atsız Bey' and 'Turkish nationalism'?

– In one of my articles about Atsız Bey, I wrote: 'I took on flesh and bone and appeared as Atsız.' Yes, that is exactly the sort of person he was, and he was the one who embodied this framework most perfectly. This is the first description that springs to mind whenever his name is mentioned, and it always has been.

– Do you have any interesting anecdotes about your time with Mr Atsız?

– Of course, we have many memories of Mr Atsız. He had a mischievous side. Every late afternoon, we'd wait for him outside the Süleymaniye Library or at the late Mustafa Kayabek's antique shop; we'd meet up and set off together from there, walking all the way to Karaköy along Kazancılar Hill, seeing him off on the Haydarpaşa ferry from the quay, and then returning. One day, when one of us offered to carry Mr Atsız's bag, he refused to let us. He was a man accustomed to doing his own work. He objected to that friend. 'Look,' he said. *'There's a snake in this bag. If it realises a stranger is carrying it, it'll slither out and bite; it's best if I carry it myself…'* he said. He said this, but there was a faint smile on his face. He had plenty of jokes like that.

– Do you know anything about Mr Atsız's family life? What would you like to say about Atsız at home?

– I have no knowledge of Mr Atsız's private life. Nor do I know anything about his home life. What might the life of a scientist, poet and novelist be like? Working, reading and writing… His contributions in every field are well known to everyone. He worked as a magazine editor for his ideals and ideas, was imprisoned, never gave up, and devoted his very last breath to Turkishness until his death. In my opinion, his private life was a life devoted entirely to Turkishness.

– From what you observed, what were Atsız Bey's different facets? What were his demeanour and mannerisms like? What would you like to say about his dialogue with young people?

– Mr Atsız spoke with an impressive style and tone of voice. He was a wise man brimming with knowledge. He always had something to say on almost any subject. He endeavoured to give a logical answer to every question. He never looked down on anyone.

He would remind young people, and us, of the need to excel in our respective fields. He would criticise certain lecturers by explaining their ignorance, lack of knowledge and the mistakes they made. I have often thought that this was, in fact, his way of guiding us. We couldn't help but be captivated by the magic of being in the presence of a man who continued to influence people, young people, through his poetry, novels, ideas and scholarly works, and of listening to him closely. He was a living, unattainable legend, and being close enough to him to converse face-to-face was a privilege.

– How many languages did he know? Do you have any idea?

– I do not know to what extent he was proficient in which languages. I believe he was familiar with French, Russian, Arabic and Persian.

– Did you discuss the '44 case' with him? What are your thoughts on it?

– We never spoke of those years. I learnt about them by reading, and I felt it would be inappropriate to ask him directly. As for my own judgement, the regime of those years artificially fabricated this incident to appease J. Stalin and created that scenario. It is one of the shameful chapters of our history. It is a process of governance that sacrificed children to appease the Soviet leader, and it is a dark stain.

– Did you ever meet Mrs Bedriye and her children?

– I met the late Mrs Bedriye at a conference. I met Buğra in Ankara whilst he was in Turkey for a while. I met Mr Yağmur at the ceremony the day after Mr Atsız passed away.

– Have you met Nejdet Sançar? What similarities or differences were there between the two brothers?

– I also met Uncle Nejdet. There was no difference whatsoever between him and Mr Atsız; they were walking the same path together. He was a man who commanded respect. He tried to help and assist people as much as he could.

– Did you attend Mr Atsız's funeral?

– On the day of the funeral, I was about to leave the country. I attended the funeral service at Hacıosmanağa Mosque. It was very crowded. I met Mr Yağmur there and offered my condolences, telling him, *'Mr Atsız was not just your father, but the father of all of us, of every one of these young people you see here.*' After staying for a while at the funeral, I left and tried to catch my flight to Yeşilköy. May he rest in peace.

– Mr Atsız's religious side is much debated. What would you like to say on this subject?

– I, too, have witnessed much of this nonsense. It is not true. I believe that his humorous replies to the ignorant, and his sarcastic responses to them, have been taken too seriously.

– What would you like to say about the reason for the rift between Mr Atsız and Türkeş?

– I do not know much about the nature of that rift, and there is no benefit to either the ideal or the future in recounting what I do know. The Programme and the Nine Lights were inspired by Atsız Bey's writings on the ideal. The Turkists of that era entered politics in 1964 on the advice and encouragement of Atsız Bey.

– We are aware that Atsız Bey received an offer to stand as a Member of Parliament. Do you have any information on this matter?

– Although we discussed many topics with him, we did not discuss him receiving such an offer, nor have I heard of it. This sounds rather like a fabrication.

– Mr Atsız's passion for tea is well known to everyone… What are your thoughts on this?

– I would say that our shared love of tea is something we all have in common.

– It is said that his financial situation was poor and that he wrote his novel whilst wearing a coat. What are your thoughts on this?

– What's so surprising about that? He followed in the footsteps of our ancestors, whom he loved dearly, with great affection. Our ancestors used to wear a garment until it was in tatters. Mr Atsız, in this context, was very fond of his coat. He couldn't bear to take it off even at home.

– Do you have any information about Atsız Bey's lost work?

– He was working on Turkish history. However, I have no information as to whether this work was ever completed, or, if it was, what it actually was.

– What are your thoughts on the growing interest in Atsız Bey these days and the works being published about him? Have you had the chance to follow his works?

– The fact that Atsız Bey's works have been reprinted in editions numbering in the hundreds, and that countless works

about him are currently being prepared and published, is a positive development. These developments mean that today's young people are becoming more aware of their Turkish identity

, and that he serves as a source of strength for them.

– Is there anything else you would like to say?

– The true lovers of this country and the Turkish nation—those who have devoted their lives to this cause—have never sought any office or position when they stepped forward to fight for the Turkish homeland, state and nation, nor have they ever aspired to them. However, it is a fine thing that, even if it is years later, they will one day be remembered by Turkish youth. What spirit would not be gladdened by being remembered? Atsız Bey, the spiritual leader of the Turkish people, is a warrior who never flinches from the fray and never retreats once he has charged. How fortunate are those who have dedicated their hearts to his ideal and walk the same path, and to all those who will continue it – may greetings be sent from here to them and to those yet to come.

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